

FOURTEEN TO ONE



ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS



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# FOURTEEN TO ONE

BY

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS



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## FOURTEEN TO ONE.

THERE are certain situations inherently too preposterous for fiction; the very telling of them involves the presumption of fact. No writer with any regard for his literary reputation would invent such a tale as that which I am about to relate. The reader will agree with me, I think, that the conclusive events of the story are but another evidence that truth is the most amazing thing in the world. For reasons which will be sufficiently obvious, I shall not make use of authentic names of either the persons or the localities involved in the recital of one of the most thrilling incidents in modern American history, but fold them in the film of fiction necessary to their presentation. I use the word *history* according to the best of my knowledge and belief. For that portion of the tale which is offered as such, my main witness is dead. I can only say that the testimony satisfied myself. My readers are at liberty to accept or refuse it as they choose. With this prefatory word, which may give force to the narrative, I need only proceed to record the circumstances.

The Reverend Mr. Matthews was hitching up his horse to go to the post-office. The horse was old; the man was old. The horse was gray; so was the



man. The wagon was well worn of its paint, which was once a worldly blue, and the wheels sprawled at the axles like a decrepit old person going bow-legged from age. The Reverend Mr. Matthews did not use the saddle, according to the custom of the region; he was lame and found it difficult to mount.

It was a chilly day, and what was once a buffalo robe lay across the wagon seat; a few tufts of hair remained upon the bare skin, but it was neatly lined with a woman's shawl — an old plaid, originally combining more colors than a rag mat, but now faded to a vague general dinginess which would recommend it to the "low tone" of modern art. The harness was as old as the buffalo robe, as old as the shawl, as old as the horse, one might venture to say as old as the man. It had been patched, and mended, and lapped, and strapped, and tied, past the ingenuity of any but the very poor, and the really intelligent; it was expected to drop to pieces at the mildest provocation, and the driver was supposed to clamber down over the bow-legged wheels and tie it up again, which he always did, and always patiently. He was a very patient old man; but there was a spark in his dim blue eye.

The reins, which he took firmly enough in his bare hands, were of rope, by the way. He could not go to the post-office on Mondays because his wife had to use the clothes-line. He felt it a special dispensation of Providence that women did not wash on Saturdays, when his number of "*Zion's Herald*" was due.

She came out of the house when he had harnessed, and stood with her hands wrapped in her little black-

and-white checked shoulder shawl, watching him with eyes where thirty years of married love dwelt gently. Something sharper than love crossed her thin face in long lines; she had an expression of habitual anxiety refined to feminine acuteness; for it was the year 1870, and it was — let us call it, since we must call it something, the State of Kennessee.

Mrs. Matthews stood in that portion of the house which Kennessee does not call a loggia, neither is it a porch, a piazza, or a hall. It results from the dual division of the house, which rises on each side, uniting in one boarded roof and a loft. Two chimneys of stone or of clay, according to the social status of the owner, flank the house on each side. The Rev. Mr. Matthews's chimneys were of clay, for he was a minister of the Methodist faith. His house was built of logs; through the space which cut the building the chickens walked critically, like boarders discussing their dinner. The domestic dwelling of a comfortable pig could be seen in the background. There were sheds, and something resembling a barn for the horse. All were scrupulously neat. Behind, the mountains towered and had a dark expression. A clear sky burned above, but one had to look for it, it was so far, and there seemed so small an allowance of it — so much of the State of Kennessee; so little of heaven.

“Are you going to the post-office?” asked Mrs. Matthews, softly. She knew perfectly well, but she always asked; he always answered. If it gave her pleasure to inquire, he reasoned, why not?

“Yes, Deborah,” said the old man, briskly. “Want to go?”

"I don't know. Is Hezekiah tuckered out?"

"Hezekiah is as spry as a chipmunk," returned the minister, confidently. Now Hezekiah was the horse, and thirty-one years old. He received this astonishing tribute with a slow revolution of his best eye (for he was blind in the other, but no one ever mentioned the fact in Hezekiah's presence) which might have passed for that superior effort of intelligence known only to the human race, and vulgarly called a wink.

"Well," said Mrs. Matthews, doubtfully, "I don't know 's I'll go."

She pronounced these words with marked, almost painful, hesitation, in an accent foreign to her environment. Her movements and dress were after the manner of Kennessee; but her speech was the speech of New Hampshire. They had been Northerners thirty years ago. Weak lungs brought him and these mountain parishes kept him. His usefulness had been so obvious, that his bishop had never shifted him far, reappointing him from term to term within a twenty-mile circuit among those barren fields. The situation was exceptional, the bishop said; at all events, he had chosen so to treat it. Thirty years — and such years! — seemed a long time to stay true to the traditions of youth and a flag. The parishioners and people whom, for courtesy, one called one's neighbors in those desolate, divided mountain homes, expressed themselves variously upon the parson's loyalty to the national cause. The Border State indecision had murmured about him critically, for the immediate region had flashed during the civil war, and remained sulky still.



The Confederacy had never lacked friends in that township. Of late the murmur had become a mutter. The parson had given offense. He had preached a sermon treating of certain disorders which had become historic, for which the village and valley had acquired unenviable notoriety, and which they were slower than some other sections in abandoning, now that the civil situation supposed them to have done so.

"If I thought I could prevent anything," proceeded Mrs. Matthews anxiously, "I'd — I'd — I don't know but I'd go. Are you goin' to hold the meetin', after all?"

"Certainly," replied the minister, lifting his head. "I shall dispense the Word as usual."

"Well," said his wife sadly, — "well, I s'pose you will. I might have known. But I hoped you'd put it off. I was afraid to ask you. I can't help worryin'. I don't know but I'll go, too. I can get my bunnet on in a minute."

Her husband hesitated perceptibly. He did not tell her that he was afraid to take her; that he was almost equally afraid to leave her. He said: —

"The lock of the back door is n't mended yet; I don't know but things need watching. That speckled bantam's dreadfully afraid of weasels when she's setting; I don't know's I blame her."

"Well," returned the old lady with a sigh, "I don't know but you're right. If it's the Lord's will I should stay at home and shoo weasels, I s'pose he can look after you without my help, if he has a mind to. Will you take the sweet potatoes along? There's a bushel and a half; and two dozen eggs."

The two old people loaded the wagon together, rather silently. Nothing further was said about the prayer-meeting. Neither alluded to danger. They spoke of the price of potatoes and chickens. The times were too stern to be spendthrift in emotion. One might be lavish of anything else; but one had to economize in feeling, and be a miser in its expression. When the parson was ready to start he kissed his wife, and said:—

“Good-by, Deborah.”

And she said, “Good-by, Levi.”

Then she said: “Let me tuck you up a little. The buffalo ain’t in.”

She tucked the old robe about the old legs with painstaking, motherly thoroughness, as if he had been a boy going to bed. She said how glad she was she had that nice shawl to line it.

“Thank you, Deborah. Keep the doors locked, won’t you? And I would n’t run out much till I get back.”

“No, I don’t know’s I will. Have you got your lantern?”

“Yes.”

“And your pistol?”

“No.”

“Ain’t you going to take it?”

“No, Deborah; I’ve decided not to. Besides, it’s a rusty old affair. It would n’t do much.”

“You’ll get home by nine, won’t you?” she pleaded, lifting her withered cheek over the high, muddy wheel. For a moment those lines of anxiety seemed to grow corrosive, as if they would eat her face out.

"Or quarter-past," said the parson, cheerfully. "But don't worry if I'm not here till half-past."

Hezekiah took occasion to start at this point; he was an experienced horse; he knew when a conversation had lasted long enough at the parting of husband and wife, in 1870, and in Kennessee. No horse with two eyes could see as much as Hezekiah. This was understood in the family.

A rickety, rocky path, about four feet wide, called by courtesy "The Road," wound away from the parsonage. The cornfield grew to it on each side. The tall stalks, some of them ten feet high, stood dead and stark, shivering in the rising wind. The old man drove into them. They closed about his gray head. Only the rear of the muddy blue wagon was visible between the husks.

"Levi! Levi! I want to ask a question."

She could hear the bow-legged wheels come to a lame halt; but she could not see him. He called through the corn in his patient voice:—

"Well, well! What is it? Ask away, Deborah."

"What time *shall* I begin to worry, Levi?"

To this essentially feminine inquiry silence answered significantly:—

"My dear," said the invisible husband after a long pause, "perhaps by ten — or half past. Or suppose we say eleven."

She ran out into the corn to see him. It seemed to her, suddenly, as if she should strangle to death if she did not see him once more. But she did not call, and he did not know that she was there. She ran on, gathering up her chocolate-colored calico dress, and wrapping her checked shawl about her head ner-

vously. At the turn of the path there was a prickly locust tree. It had been burnt to make way for crops after the fashion of the country, which is too indolent to hew; it had not been well burned, and one long, strong limb stretched out like an arm; it was black, and seemed to point at the old man as he disappeared around the twist in the path where the returning-valley curved in, and the passenger found a way to the highway. The parson was singing. His voice came back on the wind:—

“How firm a foun-da-tion, ye sa-aunts of the Lo-ord!”

She wiped the tears from her eyes and came back through the corn, slowly; all her withered figure drooped.

“I don’t know but I’d ought to have perked up and gone with him,” she said aloud, plaintively.

She stood in the house-place, among the chickens, for a few minutes, looking out. She was used, like other women in that desolate country, to being left much alone. Those terrible four years from ’61 to ’65 had taught her, she used to think, all the lessons that danger and solitude can teach; but she was learning new, now. Peace had brought anything, everything, but security. She was a good deal of a woman, as the phrase goes, with a set strong Yankee mouth. Life had never dealt so easily with her that she expected anything of it; it had given her no chance to become what women call “timid.” Yet as she stood looking through the stark corn on that cold gray day she shook with a kind of horror.

Women know what it is — this ague of the heart which follows the absent beloved. The safest lives

experience it, in chills of real foresight, or fevers of the imagination. Deborah Matthews lived in the lap of daily dangers that had not alienated her good sense, nor suffocated that sweet, persistent trust in the nature of things, call it feminine or religious, which is the most amazing fact in human life; but sometimes it seemed to her as if her soul were turning stiff, as flesh does from fear.

"If this goes on long enough, I shall die of it," she said. "He will come home some day, and I shall be dead of listenin', and shiverin', and prayin' to Mercy for him. Prayer is Scripture, I suppose, and I have n't anythin' against it; but folks can die of too much prayin', as well as a gallopin' consumption or the shakes."

Only the chickens heard her, however, and they responded with critical clucks, like church members who thought her heretical. Since chickens constituted her duties, she would gratify Heaven and divert her mind by going out to see the setting bantam; who took her for a weasel and protested violently.

Mrs. Matthews came back to the house indefinably comforted, in a spiritual way, by this secular interruption, and prepared to lock up carefully, as her husband had bidden her. It was necessary to look after all the creatures first: the critical chickens, the comfortable pig, the gaunt cow, and the Rooster, for whom, as he was but one, and had all the lordliness of his race, and invariably ran away from her, and never came till he got ready, Mrs. Matthews had a marked respect, and thought of him as spelled with a capital. It took a great while that evening



to get the Rooster into the pen, and while her feminine coax and his masculine crow ricocheted about the cornfield, the old lady cast a sharp, watchful eye all over the premises and their vicinity. Silence and solitude responded to her. No intrusion or intruder gave sign. The mountain seemed to overlook the house pompously, as a thing too small to protect. The valley had a stealthy look, as if it were creeping up to her. The day was darkening fast. The gloom of its decline came on with the abruptness of a mountain region, and the world seemed suddenly to shrink away from the lonely spot and forget it.

Mrs. Matthews, when she had locked up the animals with difficulty, deference, or fear, according to their respective temperaments, fastened the doors and windows of the house carefully, and looked at the clock. It was half-past six. She took off her muddy rubbers, brushed them neatly, folded away her shawl, and started the fire economically. She must have a cup of tea; but supper should wait for Levi, who needed something solid after Friday evening meeting. She busied herself with these details assiduously. Her life was what we might call large with trifles; she made the most of them; there was nothing better that she knew of to keep great anxieties out of the head and sickening terrors out of the heart.

There was one thing, to be sure: Mrs. Matthews called it faith in providence. The parson's wife had her share of it, but it took on practical, often secular, forms. Sometimes she prayed aloud, as she sat there alone, quaking in every nerve. Sometimes

she pitched her shrill old voice, as she did to-day, several notes above the key, and sang : —

“How firm a foun-da-tion, ye sa-aints of the Lo-ord!  
Is laid for your fa-aith in his ex-cellent word!”

But she locked the house up before she sang. She made her tea, too, and drank it.

“I always feel to get a better spiritual attitude,” she used to say, “when I’ve had my cup of tea.”

The house was so neat that its rudeness became a kind of daintiness to the eye; and the trim old lady, in her chocolate calico with its strip of a ruffle at throat and wrists, sat before the fireplace, meditative and sweet, like a priestess before an altar. She used to hate that fireplace with hot New Hampshire hatred — the kettle, the crane, and all the barbarous ways of managing; but she had contrived to get used to it now. It was the dream of her life to save money enough to freight a good Northern cook-stove over from Chattanooga. But she expected to die without it. The room winked brightly with shiny tin-ware hung above the fireplace, and chintz curtains at the windows. There were hollyhocks on the curtains which seemed like New Hampshire, if you made believe very much. There was a centre-table with a very old red and black tablecloth of the fashion of fifty years ago. The minister’s writing materials adorned this table — his tall inkstand, with its oxidized silver top: his first parish in New Hampshire gave him that inkstand, at a donation party, in a sleet storm one January night, with a barrel of flour and a bushel of potatoes. Beside the inkstand lay his quill pen, sharpened with the precision of a

man who does not do much writing ; the cheap, blue-ruled letter paper, a quire of it ; and the sacred sermon paper which Mrs. Matthews would not have touched for her life ; she would as soon have touched the sermons. These were carefully packed away in the corner in a barrel covered with turkey-red and surmounted with a board top. The family Bible lay on the board.

Above rose the minister's "library." This was a serious affair, greatly respected in the parish and adored by the minister's wife. It took at least three poplar shelves, stained by Mr. Matthews's own hand and a borrowed paint-brush, to hold that library. Upon the lower shelf the family clock ticked solemnly, flanked by Cruden's Concordance and Worcester's Dictionary. For neighbors to these there were two odd volumes of an ancient encyclopedia, the letters unfortunately slipping from A to Z without immediate alphabetical connection. Upon such subjects, for instance, as alchemy or zoölogy, the minister was known to have shown a crushing scholarship, which was not strictly maintained upon all topics. Barnes's Notes on Matthew occupied a decorous position in the library. The life of John Wesley, worn to tatters and covered with a neat brown-paper grocery-bag, overflowed into two octavo volumes, which, after all, had the comfortable, knowing look of a biography which treats of a successful life-experience, opulent in fact and feeling, alert and happy. Beside the shriveled career of this humble disciple, what a story !

The History of New Hampshire stood beside John Wesley. A map of the State of Kennessee sur-

mounted the library. For the rest, the shelves were fatly filled with filed copies of "Zion's Herald" and a Chattanooga weekly.

There was an old lounge in the room, home-made, covered with a calico comforter and a dyed brown shawl. The minister's slippers lay beside it; they were of felt, and she had made them. This lounge was Mr. Matthews's own particular resting-place when the roads were rough or the meeting late. If he were very late, and she grew anxious, his wife went up and stroked the lounge sometimes.

Their bedroom opened across the house-place from the living-room. It held a white bed, with posts, and old white curtains much darned. Mrs. Matthews's Bible lay on a table beside the bed. The room was destitute of furniture or ornaments, but it had a rag carpet and a fireplace. When Mr. Matthews had a sore throat and it was very cold they had a fire to go to bed by. That was delightful.

When Mrs. Matthews had taken her cup of tea and sung "How firm a foundation" till she was afraid she should be tired of it, which struck her as an impiety to be avoided, she walked about the house looking at everything, crossing from room to room, and looking cautiously after her. It was very still.

It was almost deadly still. How long the evening! Seven — eight — half-past eight o'clock. She tried to sew a little, mending his old coat. She tried to read the religious news in "Zion's Herald;" this failing, she even ventured on the funny column, for it was not Sunday. But nothing amused her. Life did not strike her as funny, that night. She

folded the coat, she folded the paper, she got up and walked, and walked again.

Pretty little home! She looked it over tenderly. How she loved it. How he loved it. What years had they grown to it, day by busy day, night by quiet night. What work, what sorrow, what joy and anxiety, what economy, what comfort, what long, healthy, happy sleep had they shared in it! As she passed before the fire, casting tall shadows on the chintz curtains, she began to sing again, shrilly:—

“Home — home, dear, dear home!”

Nine o'clock. Yes, nine; for the rickety old clock on the library shelf said so, distinctly. It was time to stop pacing the room; it was time to stop being anxious and thinking of everything to keep one's courage up; it was time to put the johnny-cake on and start the coffee; he would be hungry, as men-folks ought to be; God made 'em so. It was time to peep between the hollyhock curtains and put her hands against her eyes, and peer out across the corn-field. It was time to grow nervous, and restless, and flushed, and happy. It was not time, thank God, to worry.

The color came to her withered cheek. She was handsomer as an old lady than she had been as a young one, and the happier she grew the better she looked, like all women, young or old. She bustled about, with neat, housewifely fussiness. She knew that her husband thanked Heaven for her New England home-craft — none of your “easy” Southern housekeeping for Levi Matthews. What would have become of the man? As she worked, she sang unconsciously, “Dear, clean home!”

The johnny-cake was baking briskly. The candles were lighted. The coffee was stirred, and settled with the shell of an egg; it was ready to boil. It was quarter-past nine. Mrs. Matthews's head grew a little muddled from excitement. She began again at the top of her voice :

“How firm a foun-da-tion, ye sa-aints of the Lo-ord!  
Is laid for your fa-aith in an ex-cel-lent home!”

The clock wedged between the concordance and the dictionary struck half-past nine with an ecclesiastical tone; dogmatically, as if to insist on the point as a tenet on which she had been skeptical.

Mrs. Matthews stopped singing. She went to the window. The coffee was boiling over. The corn-cake was done brown. She pulled aside the curtain uneasily. The pine-wood fire flared, and blinded her with a great outburst of light. She could see nothing without, and stood for a moment dazzled. Then she began to look intently, and so accustomed her eyes to the masses of shadow and the lines of form outside. The road wound away abruptly, lost in the darkness like a river dashed into the sea. The cornstalks closed over it, stark and sear; she opened the window a little and heard them rustle, as if they were discussing something in whispers. Above the corn shot the gaunt arm of the prickly locust, burned and bare. The outlines of the mountain were invisible. The valley was sunk in the night. Nothing else was to be seen.

As she leaned, listening for the sedate hoofs of old Hezekiah, or the lame rumble of the blue wagon wheels, the Rooster uttered from his pen a piercing crow, and the bantam hen responded with an anxious cluck.



She could have killed either of these garrulous members of her family for the interruption. The chickens always crowed when she was listening for Mr. Matthews. When the irritating sounds had died away on the damp air with long, wavering echoes, a silence that was indescribably appalling settled about the place. Nothing broke it. Even the cornstalks stopped. After a significant pause they began again; they seemed to raise their voices in agitation.

"What in the world are they talkin' about?" she said impatiently. She shut the window, and came back into the middle of the room. The corn-cake was burning. The coffee must be set off. The supper would be spoiled. She looked at the Methodist clock. Mr. Cruden and the Rev. John Wesley seemed to exchange glances over its head, and hers. It lacked seven minutes of ten.

"But it is n't time to worry yet!"

The woman and the clock faced each other. She sat down before it. What was the use in freezing at the window, to hear the Rooster, and the talking corn? She and the clock would have it out. She crossed her work-worn hands upon her chocolate calico lap and looked the thing in the eye.

What a superior, supercilious clock! What a theological, controversial clock! Was there even a clock so conscious of its spiritual advantages? So sure it knew the will of the Almighty? So confident of being right about everything? So determined to be up and at it, to say it all, to insist upon it, to rub it in?

Five minutes before ten — three — two. Ten

o'clock. Ten o'clock, said in a loud, clerical tone, as if it were repeating ten of the Thirty-nine Articles to a Bishop.

"But, oh, not quite time to worry yet!" Ten minutes past. A quarter past. Twenty minutes. The woman and the clock eyed each other like duelists. Twenty-five minutes past ten. Half-past — Deborah Matthews gasped for breath. She turned her back on the clock and dashed up the window full-length.

The night seemed blacker than ever. A cloud had rolled solemnly over the mountain, and hung darkly above the house. The stalks of corn looked like corpses. But they talked like living beings still. They put their heads together and nodded. As she leaned out, trembling and panting, a flash of unseasonable lightning darted and shot; it revealed the arm of the locust tree pointing down the road. A low mutter of distant thunder followed; it rolled away, and lapsed into a stillness that shook her soul.

She came back to her chair in the middle of the room, by the centre-table. The final struggle with hope had set in. It seemed as if the clock knew this as well as she. The ticking filled her ears, her brain, her veins, her being. It seemed to fill the world.

Half-past ten. It was as if some spirit appealed to the minister's clock: Oh, tell her so softly! Say so, gently as religious love, though you be stern to your duty as religious law. Twenty-five minutes of eleven — a quarter of —

The woman has ceased to look the clock in the eye. It has conquered her, poor thing; and, now

that it has, seems sorry for her, and ticks tenderly, as if it would turn back an hour if it could. Her head has dropped into her hands; her hands to her knees; her body to the floor. Buried in the cushions of the old rocking-chair, her face is invisible. Her hands have lifted themselves to her ears, which they press violently. She herself lies crouched like a murdered thing upon the floor.

Eleven o'clock. She must not, can not, will not bear it. Eleven o'clock. She must, she can, she shall. Past all feminine fright and nervousness, past all fancy, and waste of weak vision, and prodigal anxiety, past all doubt, or hope, or dispute, it is time to worry now.

Deborah Matthews, when it had come to this, sprang to her feet, gave one piteous, beaten look at the clock, then stayed to look at nothing more. She flung open the door, not delaying to lock it behind her, and dashed out. She was as wild as a girl, and almost as agile. She ran over the rocks, and slipped in the mud, and sunk in the holes, and pushed into the cornfield, and thrust out her hands before her to brush the stalks away, and stood for a moment to get her breath underneath the locust tree. How persistently, how solemnly, that black arm pointed down the path. She felt like kneeling to it, as if it were an offended deity. All the Pagan in her stirred. Suddenly the Christian rose and wrestled with it.

"Lord have mercy!" she moaned. "He's my husband. We've been married thirty years."

"Hain't I prayed enough?" she sobbed, sinking on her knees, in the mud, among the corn. "Hain't

I said all there's any sense in sayin' to thee? What's the use in pesterin' God? But, oh, to mercy, if thou couldst take the trouble to understand what it is to be married — thirty years — and to set here in the cornfield lookin' for a murdered husband. He can't," said Deborah Matthews, abruptly starting to her feet. "God ain't a woman. It ain't in nature. He *can't* understand."

She pushed on, past the burned trees and out towards the highway. It was very dark. It was deadly lonely. It was as still as horror. Oh, there —

What tidings? For good or for ill, they had come at last. Deep in the distance the wheels of a bow-legged wagon rumbled dully, and the hoofs of a tired horse stumbled on the half-frozen ground. Far down the road she could see, moving steadily, a little sparkle, like a star. She dared not go to meet it.

Friend or foe might bear the news. Let it come. It must find her where she was. She covered her face with her shawl, and stood like a court-martialed soldier before the final shot.

"Deb-orah?"

Far down the road the faint cry sounded. Nearer, and advancing, the dear voice cried. He was used to call to her so when he was late, that she might be sure, and be spared all possible misery. He was infinitely tender with her. The Christianity of this old minister began with the marriage tie.

"Deb-orah? Deborah, my dear? Don't be frightened, Deborah. I'm coming. I've got home."

Kissing and clinging, laughing and sobbing, she

got him into the barn. Whether she clambered over the wheels to him, or he sprang out to her, whether she rode, or walked, or flew, she could not have told; nor, perhaps, could he. He was as pale as the dead corn, and seemed dazed, stunned, unnatural to her eye. Hezekiah probably knew better than either of these two excited old people how they together got his harness off, with shaking hands, and rolled the wagon into the shed, and locked the outbuildings, not forgetting the supper of the virtuous horse who rests from his labors after fifteen miles on a Kennessee road, and at the age of thirty-one.

"Lock the doors," said the minister abruptly, when they had gone into the house-place. "Lock up everything. Take pains about it. Give me something to eat or drink, and don't ask a question till I get rested."

His wife turned him about, full in the firelight, gave one glance at his face, and obeyed him to the letter. Perhaps, for the first time in her life, she did *not* ask a question. His mouth had a drawn, ghastly look, and his sunken eyes did not seem to see her. She noticed that he limped more than usual as he crossed the room to lay his old felt hat on the barrel-top beneath the library.

"You are used up," she said; "you are tuckered out! Here, drink your coffee, Levi. Here, I won't talk to you. I won't say a word. Drink, Mr. Matthews; do, dear."

He drank in great gulps exhaustedly. When she came up with the corn-cake, having turned her back to dish it, she heard a little clicking sound, and saw that his right hand closed over something which he would have hidden from her.

It was the old pistol; he was loading it, rust and all. The two looked at each other across the disabled weapon.

"It's all we have," he said. "A man must defend his own. Don't be frightened, Deborah. I'll take care of you."

"You might as well out with it," said the old lady, distinctly. "I'm ready to hear. I'm not a coward. New Hampshire girls ain't. I should think you'd know I'd been through enough, in this God-forsaken country — for that."

"Well," slowly. "Well, I suppose you're about right, Deborah. The fact is, I've had a narrow escape of it. I was warned at the meeting. We had a gratifying meeting. The Spirit descended on us. Several arose to confess themselves anxious" —

"What were you warned about?" interrupted his wife. "Never mind the anxious seat. I've sat on it long enough for one night. What's the matter? Who warned you?"

"I was warned against the Ku Klux Klan, that's all," returned the parson simply, picking up the crumbs of corn-cake from his knees, and eating them to "save" the bread. "For a disbanded organization they're pretty lively, yet, round these parts. They lay in wait for me on the road home. I had to come round over the mountain, the other way. It was pretty rough. I did n't know but they'd detail a squad there. It was pretty late. The harness broke twice, and I had to mend it. It took a good while. And I knew that you" —

"Never mind me!" cried Mrs. Matthews, with that snap of the voice which gives the accent of



crossness to mortal anxiety. "Tell me who warned you. Tell me everythin', this minute!"

"That 's about all, Deborah. A colored brother warned me. He has been desirous of being present at all the means of grace, of late. But for the — the state of public sentiment, he would have done so. He is that convert brought to me privately, a few weeks ago, by our new brother, Brother Memminger."

"I don't know 's I half like that Brother Memminger," returned the wife. "He got converted pretty fast. And he 's a stranger in these parts. His speech ain't our speech, either. But it 's a Southern name. Did he warn you?"

"He was not present to-night at the dispensing of the Word," replied the minister. "No, I was taken one side, after the benediction, without the building, by the colored brother, and warned, on peril of my life, — and on peril of his, — not to go home to-night, and to tell no man of the warning."

"But you did — you came home!"

"Certainly, my dear; you were here."

She clung to him, and he kissed her. Neither spoke for many minutes. It seemed as if he could not trust himself. She was the first to put in whispered words the thought which rocked the hearts of both.

"When they don't find you — what will they do?"

"My dear wife — my dear wife, God knows."

"What shall you do? What can we do?"

"I think," said the minister in his gentle voice, "that we may as well conduct family prayers."

“Very well,” said his wife, “if you’ve had your supper. I’ll put away the dishes first.”

She did so, methodically and quietly, as if nothing out of the common course of events had happened, or were liable to. Her matter-of-fact, housewifely motions calmed him, as she thought they would. It made things seem natural, homelike, safe, as if danger were a delirious dread, and home and love and peace the foundations of life, after war, in *Kennessee*.

When she had washed her hands and taken off her apron, she came back to the lounge and brought the family Bible with her, and the hymn-book. They sang together one verse of their favorite hymn, “How firm a foundation,” with the quavering, untrained voices that had “led the choirs” of mountain meetings for almost thirty years of patient, self-denying missionary life. Then the parson read, in a firm voice, a psalm, — the ninety-first; and then he took the hand of his wife in his, and they both knelt down by the lounge, and he prayed aloud his usual, simple, trustful, evening prayer.

“O Lord, our heavenly Father, thy mercies are new every morning, and fresh every evening. We thank thee that though danger walketh in darkness, it shall not come nigh us. We bless thee that thou art so mindful of thine unworthy servant and handmaiden. We thank thee that for nearly thirty years we have dwelt in conjugal love and peace beneath our comfortable roof. We thank thee that no disaster hath rendered us homeless, and that the hand of violence hath not been raised against us. We pray thee that thou wilt withhold it from us this

night, that we may sleep in peace, and awake in safety" —

"Levi!"

A curdling whisper in his ear interrupted the old man's prayer. "Levi! There are *footsteps in the corn!*"

"And awake in safety," proceeded the minister firmly, "to bless thy tender care" —

He did not rise from his knees, but prayed on in a strong voice. So well trained to the religious habit was the woman that she did not cry out, nor interrupt him again, nor did she even arise from her knees before the old lounge.

Suddenly voices clashed, cries upsprang, and a din surrounded the house.

"Come out! Come out! Out with the Yankee parson! Out with the nigger-praying preacher! Show yourself!"

The old man's hand tightened upon the hand of his old wife; but neither rose from their knees. The confusion without redoubled. Calls grew to yells. Heavy steps dashed foraging about the house. Cries of alarm from the outbuildings showed that the animals, which were the main support of the simple home, were attacked, perhaps destroyed. Then came the demand: —

"Come out! Come out to us! Show yourself you sneaking, Yankee parson! Out to us!"

A terrific knock thundered on the door. Steadily the calm voice within prayed on: —

"We trust thee, O Lord, and we bless thee for thy mercy to usward" —

"Open the door, or we will pull your shanty down to hell!"

“Preserve us, O Lord, for thy loving-kindness endureth forever” —

“Open the door, —— you, or we ’ll set the torches to it, and burn you out !”

“Protect us, O God” —

The light lock yielded, and the old door broke down. With a roar the mob rushed in. They were not over sixteen, but they seemed sixty, storming into the little room. They were all masked, and all armed to the teeth.

Before the sight which met his eyes the leader of the posse fell back. He was a tall, powerful fellow, evidently by nature a commander, and the men fell back behind him.

“For Christ’s sake, Amen,” said the parson. He rose from his knees, and his wife rose with him. The two old people confronted the desperadoes silently. When the leader came closer to them he saw that the Rev. Mr. Matthews’s hands were both occupied. With the left he grasped the hand of his wife; in the right he held his rusty pistol. The hymn-book had fallen to the floor; but the family Bible had been reverently laid with care upon the lounge, its leaves yet open at the ninety-first psalm.

“Gentlemen,” said the parson, speaking for the first time, “I would not seem inhospitable, but the manner of your entering has perturbed my wife and interrupted our evening prayer, which it is our custom never to cut short for any insufficient cause. Now I am ready to receive you. Explain to me your errand.”

“It’s a —— short one,” said a voice from the gang; “a rope and a tree will explain it easy enough.”

"And nothing less!" cried a hoarse man. "We have n't come on any boys' play this time. We've had chase enough to find you for one night."

"That's so. It's no fool's errand, you bet. We ain't a tar-and-feathering party. We mean business."

"Gentlemen! gentlemen!" pleaded the parson. He took the hand of his wife as he spoke, and lifted it to his shrunken breast, and held it there, delicately.

It was the piteous instinct of manly protection powerless to protect.

"In the name of civil justice, O my neighbors, wherein have I offended you?"

"That's our business. It's a serious one, too," cried the hoarse man. "Your —— pious prayer-meetings have been a nursery of sentiments we don't approve, that's all. You've admitted a —— darky among respectable white citizens. Come now, have n't you? Own up!"

"Certainly," replied the parson promptly. "There was one colored brother present at the means of grace on one or two occasions. I regretted that my congregation did not altogether welcome him. He was converted by the mercy of God, beneath my ministrations. Would ye that I denied him the poor benefit of my prayers? Nay, then, as God hears me, I did not, nor I would not."

The old man's dim eyes flashed. He raised his rusty pistol, examined it, and laid it down. Before sixteen well-armed men he began to comprehend the uselessness of his old weapon. He looked upon the array of grotesque and ghastly masks steadily; they rose like a row of demons before his biblically

trained imagination. Mr. Matthews believed in demons, in a simple, unquestioning way.

"And you've preached against that which was no business of yours. Come now, own to it! You've meddled with the politics and justice of the State. You have preached against the movements of the Klan — what's left of it. That is n't much. It's done for. We're only a few gentlemen, looking after things on our own hook."

"I own to it," said the parson quietly. "I have delivered a discourse upon the topic of your organization. I felt called of Heaven to do it. Is that all ye have against me? I pray you, for my wife's sake, who is disquieted by your presence, as you see, to leave us to ourselves and go your way — from under my roof."

"Have him out! Right smart, now!" yelled the hoarse man. "Have him out without more words! A rope! A rope! Where's a rope?"

In a moment there was *mêlée* in the house. Cries arose to the effect that the rope was left in the corn. But a fellow who had been browsing about outside ran in with a rope in his hand and handed it to the hoarse man. The rope was Mrs. Matthews's clothes-line — Hezekiah's reins. The hoarse man gave it to the leader with an oath. The leader seemed to hesitate, and conferred in a whisper with the hoarse man and with others; but he was apparently overborne in his hesitation; he took the rope, and advanced with a certain respect to the parson, death in his hand, but who knew what pity in his heart? The mask hid it if any were there. The noise from the gang now increased brutally. Cries, oaths, curses, calls



to death resounded through the pure and peaceful room. The hoarse man lassoed the rope, and threw it around the parson's neck. At this moment a terrible sound rang above the confusion.

It was the cry of the wife.

She had possessed herself magnificently up to this time; the Puritan restraint set upon her white, old face; she had not said a word. No murderer of them all had seen a tear upon her withered cheek. But now nature had her way. She flung herself to her knees before the ruffians; then upon her husband's neck; back upon her knees — and so, in a passion wavering between agony and entreaty, pleaded with them. She cried to them for the love of Heaven, for the love of God, for the sake of "Jesus Christ his Son, their Saviour," so she put it, with the lack of tact and instinct for scriptural phraseology belonging to her devout, secluded life.

The phrase raised a laugh.

She cried to them for the love of their own wives, for the sake of their mothers, by the thought of their homes, for the sake of wedded love, and by his honorable life who had ministered respected among them for nearly thirty years — by the misery of widowhood, and by the sacredness of age. In her piteous pleading she continued to give to the murderers, at the very verge of the deed, the noblest name known to the usages of safe and honorable society.

"Gentlemen! *gentlemen!* For the sake of his gray hair! For the sake of an old wife" —

But there they pushed her off. They struck her hands from their knees; they tore her arms from his neck, and so were dragging him out, when the parson said in a clear voice: —

“Men! — ye are at least men, — give way to the demand of my soul before you hurl it to your Maker. I pray you to leave me alone, for the space of a moment, with this lady, my wife, that we may part one from the other, and no man witness our parting.”

At a signal from the big leader the gang obeyed this request. The men hustled out of the broken door. The leader stood within it.

“Watch ’em! Watch ’em like a lynx!” cried the hoarse man. But the leader turned his back.

“Deborah! Kiss me, my dear. You’ve been a good wife to me. I think you’d better go to your brother — in New Hampshire — I don’t know. I have n’t had much time to plan it out for you. Tell him I would have written to him if I had had time. Tell him to take good care of you. Oh — God bless you, my dear. Why don’t you speak to me? Why don’t you kiss me? Your arms don’t stay about my neck — What! Can’t hold them there — at this last minute? Pray for me, Deborah. Deborah! why don’t you answer me? O my wife, my wife, *my wife!*”

But she was past answering; past the sacred agony of that last embrace. She had dropped from his breast, and lay straight and still as the dead at his feet.

“God is good,” said the old man solemnly. “Let her be as she is. I pray you do not disturb her. Leave her to the swoon which He has mercifully provided for her relief at this moment — and do with me as ye will, before she awakens.”

A certain perceptible awe fell upon the gang as the old man stepped around the unconscious form of his wife and presented himself in the doorway.

"He seems to be a grateful old cove," said one man in a low voice. "I don't know 's I ever heard a feller in his circumstances give God a good name before."

"No sniveling!" cried the hoarse man. "Have it over!"

They took him out, and arranged to have it over as quickly as might be. It must be admitted that the posse were nervous. They did not enjoy that night's work as much as they had expected to. They were in a hurry now to be done with it and away.

The old man offered no useless resistance. He walked with dignity, and without protest. He limped more than usual. His head was bare. His gray hair blew in the rising wind. The rope was around his neck.

Some one had wheeled out the blue wagon and rolled it under the locust tree. As this was done the old horse whinnied for his master from the stall. The parson was pushed upon the cart. Short work was made of it. As the leader of the gang stooped to help the hoarse man fling the rope over the burned bare limb of the tree, and to adjust the noose about the old man's neck, — which he made insistence on doing himself, — a mask dropped. It was the face of the chief himself which was thus laid bare, and alas, and behold, it was even no other face than the face of —

"Brother Memminger!" cried the old minister, speaking for the first time since he had been dragged from the house. The leader restored his mask to his downcast face, with evident embarrassment.

"*You!*" said the parson. "I thought," he added gently, "that you had found a Christian hope. You communed with me at the Sacrament two weeks ago. I administered it to you. I am — sorry, Brother Memminger."

The fellow muttered something, Heaven knew what, and fell back a step or two. Some one else prepared the rope to swing the old man off. He who was known as Brother Memminger dropped to the rear of the gang, surveyed it carefully, then advanced to his place at the front, nearest to the victim. Every man awaited his orders. He was their chief. They had organized and they obeyed, even in their decline, a military government. There was a moment's pause.

"I would like," said the doomed man gently, "a moment to commend my soul to God."

This was granted him, and he stood with his gray head bowed. His hands were tied behind him. His face was not muffled; it had a high expression. His lips moved. Those who were nearest thought they heard him murmur the first words of the Lord's Prayer. "Hallowed be Thy name," he said, and paused.

He said no more, nor seemed to wish it. So they ranged themselves, every man of them, to swing him off, each standing with both hands upon the rope, which had been spliced by another to a considerable length. He who was called Memminger stood, as he was expected, to give the final order. There were fourteen of them — and Memminger the chief. Beside him stood an idle fellow, masked like the rest, but apparently a servant, a tool of Memminger's,

who had especial service for him, perhaps. If the old man struggled too much — or an accident happened — it was well to have an unoccupied hand. Memminger, in fact, had been well known in the gang for a good while, and was implicitly trusted and obeyed.

In putting their hands to the rope every man of them had of necessity to lay down his arms, both hands being clenched upon the rope, for a strong pull. They meant to break the old man's neck, and be done with it. Really, nobody cared to torture him.

"We're ready," said the hoarse man. "Give the signal, Cap'n. Hurry up."

The light of their lanterns and torches revealed the old man clearly — the long arm of the locust above his head — the stormy sky above. Death was no paler than the parson, but he did not struggle.

His lips moved still in silent prayer. His eyes were closed. The men bent to the rope. The chief raised his hand. The last signal hung upon his next motion.

Then there was a cry. Then his mask dropped, and from the face of the man beside him another fell, and it was the face of a negro, obedient and mute. Then the powerful figure of the leader straightened. His familiar eye flashed with a perfectly unfamiliar expression. Two muscular arms shot out from his body; each hand held a revolver sprung at full-cock and aimed.

"Boys!" he cried in an awful voice, "*I am an officer of the United States! and the first man of you who lets go that rope, DROPS!*"

In an instant, armed as he was, he covered them, every man of them unarmed and standing as they were. His negro servant sprang to his aid.

"The first man of you who stirs a muscle on that rope dies!" thundered the quasi Brother Memminger. "I am a deputy marshal, authorized by the National Government to investigate and hasten the disbanding of the Ku Klux Klan, and, in the name of the Stars and Stripes, and law and order, I arrest you, every man!"

And, in the name of simple wonder and astounding history, it was done. The negro servant, whose person bulged with hidden handcuffs, bound the men, one at a time, fourteen of them, while his master's experienced weapons covered the gang. They behaved with the composure of intelligent and dumfounded men. One of them ventured an observation. It was the hoarse man. He said: "—— ——— ——— you — to ——," struggled mightily with his handcuffs, and then held his tongue.

The whole posse, by means of this simple stratagem, and by the help of that cowardice elemental in all brutes, was marched to the nearest sheriff; then delivered intact to the power of the law which the great mass of Kennessee citizens were ready to respect and glad to see defended. The country rang with the deed. Then whispers arose to hush it, for shame's sake. But it crept to Northern ears, and I record it as it was related to me.

"How is it, Parson?" said Deacon Memminger with a bright, shrewd smile, as he cut the old man down, and helped him, trembling as he was, to dismount the shaky cart. "How is it, sir? Are you



sorry I came to church at your place — now ? I thought — under the circumstances — and I was bound to save you. I and my darky boy have been ferreting out this thing for a hundred days. I joined 'em the first week I came down here. I came on from Washington to do it. We mean to make a thorough job of it — and I guess we 've done for 'em, this time. You 'll excuse me, sir, but I 've got to get 'em to the sheriff, and — I 'd go back and see my wife, if I were you."

She came to herself and to her misery soon enough, lying there upon the floor beside the lounge. The first thing which she saw distinctly was the Bible, opened at the psalm which has calmed more souls in shocks of danger, and in the convulsions of lawless times, than any other written words known to the literatures of the race.

But the first thing which she heard was his precious voice, pitched low, and modulated tenderly, so as not to frighten her.

"Deb-orah ! Deb-orah ! Don't be scared, my dear. They have not hurt me — and I 'm coming back to you."

## THE BELL OF SAINT BASIL'S.

IT was a cold morning — for Virginia; and, as everybody knows, Virginia has a plenty of them. The frost bent the fennel so heavily that it lay over like fine silver-work upon the ground, where a flurry of snow skipped before the gusts. The wind itself was restless and ill-natured, like a wind that had got into the wrong climate by mistake, and was hurrying to go somewhere else. Ice lay in opaque sheets upon the pools and swamps, and the air stung. There was no sun. As early as seven o'clock the grayness of the sky took on a determined look, as that of a sky which meant business. One felt something of the same unreasonable resentment before it that one feels before a hard creditor, who would, on the whole, prefer to make one uncomfortable rather than give grace, but who is nevertheless entirely justifiable, and one knows it. If it was cold out-of-doors, it was colder within. When Virginia shivers, she is always taken by surprise. She looks out through her half-built houses as if she were a soft brown-eyed girl in a gauze dress, protesting that she is cold, and wondering why.

The weather came in at the doors; the weather came in at the windows; the weather rushed in under the house; cracks in the walls welcomed it; crevices in the posts betrayed one to it; the wide

chimneys, where the fires lay unlighted, gulped it in; the floors were flooded with it.

President Peyton's eminently respectable if economical house seemed to keep swallowing little draughts, like a person with a sore throat, whom it hurts, but who can't stop.

When President Peyton got out of his old-fashioned four-posted bed, that morning, pushing aside the curtains of chintz and mosquito-netting with a scholarly, aged hand, he hung his clothes over one arm, and went to find what the thermometer was before he put them on. The thermometer hung over the veranda roof, as it had for thirty years, — as it would for how many more? — upon a rusty tack in the same spot, beneath the window-sill, in the southerly exposure.

"You're letting in the cold, Mr. Peyton," pleaded a vague feminine voice from behind the bed-curtains. "I'm frozen to death. I'm cold enough, Mr. Peyton, to — to — I'm cold enough to — swear."

"Maria!" ejaculated the old man severely.

"Why, Mr. Peyton!" cried his wife. It was such an event when her husband called her Maria that the poor old lady was frightened. She had known it to happen but a few times in many years: once when he was very angry with her because she had burned a manuscript lecture of his by mistake; and another time when they were in great trouble, but then he had said it so kindly that she had never forgotten it.

That had happened about this time of year, toward the last of January. She could not have told precisely when. She had the indifference or lapse of

memory about dates that is apt to be characteristic of age. If life has been full, especially if life has been sad, what matters a day more or less? Sentiments, sensations, affections, grow more important; time, as we approach eternity, less. It dwindles away from us as the two-thousand-year-old heroine of a popular romance shrank to the size of a little ignoble animal when her hour came.

Their trouble had been sore at Mrs. Peyton's heart for many weeks; it had eaten there like a fresh hurt made by the turning of an old barb. Her wound had never cicatrized. The nature of it made this impossible. She had sat alone a good deal at twilight, lately, crying in her rocking-chair by the light-wood fire, in the shadowy old parlor, before the President came in from the study, at precisely five minutes before six, and said, —

“Mrs. Peyton, we will now dine.”

But she did not tell Mr. Peyton. Mr. Peyton had strange ways. He loved her, of course; it was the proper thing for husbands to love their wives; but though they had been married forty years, she stood in awe of him yet. When he went to Richmond, or even as far as Baltimore, on a journey, he always wrote to her. He began the letters, “My dear Mrs. Peyton,” and signed himself, “Yours very truly.”

Maria Peyton had read her love-story in a dead language, poor thing. A simple, feminine, cuddling woman, who would have let a man beat her, and been happy, if only he would have stroked her like a kitten now and then, she might as well have married the Classical Dictionary or Crabb's Synonyms as the President of Saint Basil's, in Chester, Virginia.

So she did not tell her husband when she cried why. It was one of the President's "ways" not to talk about their trouble. She wished he would. It might even, she thought, have been more bearable. If now and then she could have said, "Anthony, do you remember?" or, "My dear, it was so many years ago, about this time;" or, "I did n't mean to cry, but I was thinking of" — But she could do nothing of the kind. For twenty years the old man had not spoken to his wife of what befell them. He never tried to explain to her that this had become almost pathologically impossible. With any allusion to certain events a physical pain so deadly griped his heart that he avoided it, practically, as one would avoid a bayonet, though he was quite a healthy man. But he supposed women could not understand such things. Expression was their law. The reserve of manhood, the reticence of vigorous anguish, they knew not. It was the nature of their sex, he reasoned. It did not occur to him that his wife had achieved a silence sadder, because more unnatural, than his own. So, under the solemn arch of that massive grief, which should have sheltered a consolatory and compensatory oneness, these two stricken people walked apart.

They had a boarder at the Peytons', and when the President and his wife came down to breakfast, that January morning, the boarder said it was very cold. She said she didn't believe it was colder than this in New York. She was in the habit of saying this. She added that she had coughed all night, and that Abraham had not brought her half enough wood. This, too, was a familiar remark. Mrs. Peyton

apologized, and said she would attend to it, but the President bowed politely, with a vague smile. He had ceased to give his attention to the conversational gifts of the Northern boarder, whom he regarded as, on the whole, the most depressing result of the late civil war. Who had ever heard of a Peyton keeping boarders? Even when you reduced the devastation to the singular number, he could not regard *a* boarder as other than a social and sociological phenomenon, when coughing at his own distinguished table and complaining of the mattresses in his own hospitable guest-room from December until May. The boarder's name, this year, happened to be Miss Sparker. But that was immaterial. Any name fitted the qualities which reproduced themselves from season to season, with that monotonous indifference to personification which the President thought not without interest as bearing upon the doctrine of the transmigration of the faculty or the partial soul. It was the only interesting thing he had ever found about the Northern boarder.

Breakfast was the least comfortable of the comfortless meals at the Peytons', because the President had to hurry away to prayers. Mrs. Peyton helped him to his hominy with an anxious hand. Nothing annoyed the President like being late at college. She said it made him nervous. If she had been a rousing, spunky Northern wife, she would have said it made him unbearable. He never scolded brutally, for he was quite a gentleman; he congealed, — that was all. A Boston sleet-storm might as well have spent the day in that house. Anthony Peyton's sternness when displeasure befell him was some-



thing hardly less than terrible. His students used to know that. Scattered all over the South to-day are middle-aged men who tell each other college stories of the President, with a shrug in which a reminiscent shudder lingers sensibly still.

His wife had borne the full force of his nature in this respect meekly; it being hers to do so. Besides herself, there had been one other who had borne it, — according to nature, too.

"You will wear your overcoat, Mr. Peyton, won't you?" pleaded Mrs. Peyton timidly, as the President pushed back his chair, and, bowing coldly to the two ladies, prepared to breast the bitter morning.

"It is very cold," sighed the Northern boarder, with an air of originality. "It can't be worse in New York. My chicken is burned, Mrs. Peyton. I'll have another cup of coffee, if you please. Now, our coffee in New York" —

"And an umbrella, too?" entreated Mrs. Peyton. She followed the President out into the hall, leaving the boarder and Abraham to have it out. She stood, shivering, before her husband, a little, shrunken, white, cowed old lady, in a pale purple dress and white knit shawl. She had been a beauty once, and called "spirited." She felt an unwonted sadness and tenderness this morning. Old as she was, she wanted to be asked what ailed her, or even to be kissed.

"You will take cold, Mrs. Peyton," her husband said politely. "Return and entertain your guest."

The college of Saint Basil's, so far as it was materialized in the college buildings, stood a round half mile from the President's house. A chapel and a

couple of dormitories comprised the architectural effect; these were old and ruinous. Saint Basil's was none of your high-schools, starting up like Christmas presents every year, and dubbing themselves colleges, as the boot-black or the barber lays claim to the title of Professor. So thought the President, as he drew his learned coat-collar about his aged neck, and beat with the energy of a much younger man against the rising wind. He was apt to cultivate this thought on the way to prayers, on a chilly morning. He took some comfort in it, which was fortunate, for there was nothing else about Saint Basil's that a man could take comfort in now. The sense of dignity is the easiest substitute for practical success, and the President of St. Basil's made the most of it.

As the college came in sight, he slackened his nervous pace a little. He had always done so in the historic days of the institution, when it had four hundred boys. He had liked to enter the chapel with the grand manner, while the students stood bareheaded, in rank, to let him precede them. He liked to do so now. It kept up the sense of reality which the unoccupied scholar fed within himself voraciously in these pantomimic days lest it starve, and an old man's courage with it.

Saint Basil's was not a cheerful specimen of architecture at best. It was particularly grim in that advancing storm. The old brick dormitories seemed to draw up their shoulders to keep warm. Here and there a shutter flapped on the closed and cobwebbed windows. The steps and doorways were deserted; the campus behind lay silent in the lightly scatter-

ing snow. From the rusty college pump the handle was gone. The brick chapel, standing between the sombre dormitories like a clergyman between two unlighted pulpit lamps, regarded the President as if it were an intelligent thing who understood him. Possibly it did, — no human creature as well. The chapel, too, was still. No smoke struggled from its chimneys, which leaned a little for lack of iron props. Upon the windows of the lecture-rooms upstairs the blinds were drawn ; many a slat was missing. Pray was the janitor late ? No fires built ? What negligent underling had omitted to ring the bell for morning prayers ? The tongue of old Saint Basil's mute ? Why did not her iron lips open to call her boys to chapel ? The boys ? Where *were* the boys ? Upon the broken rail-fence, singing college songs ? Behind the dormitories, jammed into a Sophomore rush ? Waiting the old man's coming, to burst into the college yell, "*Saint Ba-sil loved a pri-o-ress ?*" Standing bareheaded, rank on rank, to greet their President, like the Southern gentlemen that they were ? See their young heads bowed with that graceful ease which gave Saint Basil her celebrated "manner," their indolent white hands passing the quick gesture of deference from the bare brow. Do you see the students ? Count the boys of Saint Basil's. Call the roll. Where *are* the boys ?

Seek them in their ruined cotton-fields, in their shattered homes, in hard, unaccustomed manly toil at industries strange to their ancestry, and to their training, and to their State. Seek them in sunken, nameless graves on the banks of the Potomac, at Antietam, at Gettysburg. Find them beneath letters

of marble and crosses of flowers on Decoration Day, at Richmond. Saint Basil's boys have gone beyond the urging voice of the chapel bell. Saint Basil cannot call her roll to-day. The ancient college, patronized by an English king, honored by the English Church, once graced by a faculty representing the scholarship of Virginia, long the Alma Mater of her "family," if not always the educator of her eminent men, Saint Basil's, the pride of the proud, the fetich of the ignorant, now become the anecdote of collegiate history, had met the fate common to other interesting facts in the South. She existed "before the war." Saint Basil was, in short, a college without a boy. She had kept her ancient name, her distinguished President, her college buildings, her extended real estate, her chartered rights, and to some extent her invested endowments. What she had not kept was her students. Virginians spoke of the college as they do of the corn-fields, the mansions, the very chickens; nay, the moon in the heavens: "Oh, you ought to have seen it before the war!"

The President of Saint Basil's passed through the ranks of unseen students, with a stately step. It might have been touching to a delicate observer to see that the old man lifted his hat as he did this. It seemed like the response of a gentlemanly ghost to the deference of spirits. Nevertheless, he shivered like a live man as he put the huge key in the lock of the chapel door. How unmannerly the cold was that day! If he had expected such weather, he would have asked the trustees to provide a janitor and a fire for the daily flummery through which the aged President was expected to pass, that the college

might retain her charter and he his office. Once a day, for the space of time covered by the college terms, the President of Saint Basil's officially visited her deserted halls. There, he summoned the invisible institution to order, and conducted, for the instruction of its unseen youth, the service for morning prayers.

This fact, perhaps the only instance of its kind in modern collegiate history, is not, as one would suppose, widely known. Chester is a remote village, not yet promoted to the scale of a Southern health resort, and the cogs of life's wheels turn slowly there. The Northern tourist is still too few, and usually too feeble or too feminine, to cultivate an interest in so classical a local legend, and reporters are a race unknown. The Chester native is so familiar with the sight of the old man toiling over at half-past seven every morning to the silent college, with a key in his trembling hands, that one has long since ceased to pay attention to the circumstances; or says indifferently, —

“There's the President going over to prayers.”

Sometimes, an intellect more original than the average, perhaps the telegrapher or a railroad man, ventures the added and daring comment, —

“They ought to have given him a janitor. They've nothing else to do with their money.”

Now, in fact, the President had refused the janitor. Possibly he had some sort of pride in the matter; preferring to do something which struck him as obvious toward the desert of that salary which he drew quarterly from the board of trustees representing the existence and honor of the institution. Really, the

honor of the institution was the main point in his scholastic and unmercenary mind. So it had come about that the President rang the bell of Saint Basil's every morning, with his own aged hands.

Had it ever been so cold at college before? The old man stamped off the light snow in the dusty vestibule, with a sigh. He had been an ambitious man in his day, looking forward to an old age of honored and honorable activity. He had not thought to become a fussy, idle old man, dressing by the thermometer. He had expected to be busily eminent for his scholarship, and in correspondence with the scholars of other institutions and sister States, — entertaining them at Commencements. He had thought to be widely known, too, and feared by students for his remarkable discipline. He had never expected the boys to love him. But they had always obeyed.

He looked drearily about the deserted building as he lifted his hands to the bell-rope. Who was there to obey him now? Other thoughts appealed to his mind, which wandered from the students, as it often did, — too often did. But these, as he never shared them, he bore best when he was alone.

Ring! Rang! Clang! The college bell clashed upon the frosty air, with which it harmonized by the hardest. It was a rusty old bell, and its call was a little cross that morning. It spoke imperiously, severely, like a bell that had always had its own way, and could not understand why nobody answered it.

Ring! Ring! Such a thing! Who ever heard of such a thing? Noise! Noise! Boys! *Boys!* Call! Call them all! Tell — tell! Saint Basil's bell!



Saint Basil — yes ! Loved — a — prioress ! Make a noise — boys ! Where are the boys ? Who dares ? Not come to prayers ? *Come to PRAYERS !*

The last authoritative cry clashed over the iron lips, and ceased. When they opened again, they opened gently, like a stern soul grown sad. Appealingly the bell began to toll : —

Roll — toll. Tell the whole. Call them all. Call the roll ! Toll — toll. Fought and bled. Count the dead. Boys — boys ! Stop life's noise. Come back, boys ! Rest — rest. Peace is best. Here is rest. Home is best. Stay — stay ! Come to-day ! Come and pray ! Stay and pray ! Oh — stay ! Oh — pray !

The voice of Saint Basil's reached so far and said so much that morning that it was especially noticed in the neighborhood. A negro, driving in to market with sweet potatoes and ducks, spoke of it to a stranger who was strolling through the village. He said de ole bell was kind o' peart dat mornin' ; 'peared like she'd toted some ob her boys back. The stranger said Yes ; that he had been listening to it, and asked what it was rung for and who rang it. For he had understood, he said, that the college was closed years ago.

The President rang conscientiously for eight minutes, according to college law. When the time was honorably up, the trembling rope fell from the trembling hand, and swung off into the air. The last cry pealed and echoed from Saint Basil's throat, and died away : —

Pray — pray ! Oh, stay, stay ! Oh, pray ! Come pray !

The President entered the deserted chapel with uncovered head. The chill struck him heavily that morning, as he walked up the long aisle between the wooden pews, whittled jagged with boys' initials; he knew some of them by heart, from such long acquaintance. There was one deep, naughty cut in the oaken railing before the very chancel, — *A. P.*, the letters ran; he glanced at them as he ascended the steps, with bowed head, and took his strange, solitary position behind the reading-desk. He looked the learned man he was as he stood there in the dim and empty chapel; and this became him, for Saint Basil was the scholar among the saints, as her President used to remind the boys. Yet, that January morning, he seemed a very desolate, cold old man, and one would have thought less of his LL. D. than of his aching fingers, or perhaps his aching heart. The empty benches stretched before him, row on row, a silent, mocking audience. Their invisible occupants came thronging in. The boys of Saint Basil's are still enough now. No need to give them long marks for inattention, President Peyton. Will you rusticate them, sir, for sticking pins in each other at recitation? Suspend them for humming "Saint Basil loved a pri-o-ress" while you pray? Write letters of complaint to the silent home of the most rebellious ghost among them? Expel that reckless lad — that one yonder in the front pew — he who had the yellow curls and the saucy eyes; the beautiful fellow? The wildest of the lot always, — up to every trick Saint Basil's ancient halls had ever known; bubbling to the brim with frolic; maddened by severity, melted by tenderness, spoiled by

either, spoiled by both; shining with the glory of eternal youth; handsome, defiant, daring, splendid — Expel that spirit? Mr. President, expel that spirit if you can!

“*Almighty and most merciful Father,*” began the President of Saint Basil’s. His voice resounded through the empty chapel; it was strong and firm and fine. He read the prayer uncommonly well; he always had. He slighted nothing of its solemn import now. If any one of Saint Basil’s boys had happened in to the chapel, whether in the spirit or the flesh, he would have been proud of the old President, as he always was.

“*We have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep,*” prayed the solitary man. “*We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. . . . But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou those who are penitent; According to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

The chapel door stirred in the strengthening wind; or perhaps a broken blind gave way, or the step of one of the ghostly boys hit a hymn-book fallen from the seat just then? But the President of Saint Basil’s was used to spirit-boys; he so often fancied strange sounds in the chapel that he had trained himself to notice none of them. With his white head bowed and reverently lowered eyes, the old man solemnly read on: —

“*And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.*”

"*Amen!*" responded a living voice from the empty pews.

The figure of the President, bowed over the prayer-book, stirred visibly, but did not start. He had lived too many times in imagination through some such scene as this to suffer himself to express surprise. If any of Saint Basil's boys returned, — and why should *not* Saint Basil's boys return? — they should find the institution prepared to receive them with the dignity which became her. Should her ancient halls bow and smirk, like a mushroom college without a student? If her boys had been scattered for a week's recess, or had but gone to William and Mary's for a ball-match, the President might have received the startling incident which now befell him with as grand a carelessness. Yet in truth it shook him to the soul.

When he raised his gray head, it could have been seen that he trembled, and that his countenance had become very pale. Had any person been observing him — But no one was. His cool, intellectual gray eye — a little feverish spark burning within it — traversed the length of the chapel before it rested upon the figure of a man in one of the back pews, near the door. The man was kneeling upon one of the old prayer-cushions; his head was bowed; his face was hidden in his hands; he did not speak nor stir.

President Peyton closed his prayer-book, and slowly descended the chancel steps. His mind was in a tumult strange to its scholastic peace. He was prepared to get out his old examination papers nonchalantly, as if it were a matter of course. Saint

Basil's should not appear as if she did not matriculate new students any day. He saw himself already going home to tell Mrs. Peyton and the Northern boarder that he should lecture to the Freshman class at half-past three. He lifted his white head. His stately figure straightened. The stoop of age rose out of his fine shoulders, and his eye turned strong and young. He walked with great official dignity down the broad aisle, and stopped before the kneeling stranger.

His thin lips had opened to address the young man, but they closed silently and cautiously.

It was not a boy who knelt in Saint Basil's at morning prayers that day. It was a middle-aged man. He seemed to be rather a poor man, or at least he was shabbily dressed. Of his face, persistently hidden in his hands, nothing could be seen. This gave the more prominence to the shape of his head, which was good, though a little weak in the frontal lobes, and to his abundant curling hair, well marked with gray.

Now, when the President had drawn his stately steps to a halt before the kneeling man, he perceived that the worshiper was sobbing.

At this unexpected sight the old man retreated immediately. With great delicacy he forbore even to remain in the chapel, but, passing quickly out, stood in the vestibule, uncertain and distressed. He waited there for some moments, but the visitor did not show himself. The President, perplexed, pushed open the faded baize doors softly and looked in. The kneeling figure in the deserted chapel remained immovable. Only its hands had stirred, and these

were thrown over the railing of the pew in front, and knotted together as if they had been wrung.

"Sir," said the President, himself much agitated, "I am an officer of Saint Basil's. Can I serve you in any way?"

At the sound of his voice the distress of the stranger made itself more manifest. An audible sob—the terrible sob of a man no longer young—shook the air.

"My dear *sir*!" cried the President, quite forgetting himself. But the weeping man lifted one of his clasped hands, and waved the speaker away with a gesture so piteous and so imperious that it was impossible to disregard it. President Peyton bowed and left the chapel, hat in hand.

He went out into the storm, and wandered about for a little while, greatly moved and uncertain what to do. The stranger did not come out, and it grew very cold. The old man felt chilled to the heart. He decided that he would go home and think the matter over, and get warm, and then return.

His wife met him when he came in, lifting her little, pinched, sad old face cautiously to see how his moral thermometer stood. It annoyed him that she looked afraid of him, and he did not tell her, as he had meant to do, what had happened at the college. He sat down by the study fire alone, and tried to dry his feet; but he was restless, and could not stay. In a few minutes he started out again, saying nothing to anybody. Miss Sparker called from the top of the stairs to ask what the thermometer was, and to say that it was ten degrees lower in New York, and Mrs. Peyton cackled anxiously about the halls;



but he shut the front door with a succinctness which in a less distinguished man would have been called a slam.

When he got back to the college, he was wet through and dismally cold. The chapel was empty. The man was gone. The President locked the chapel door, with a sigh, and went home and changed his stockings and put his feet in mustard-water.

He told his wife, in the course of the day, what had happened, for he could not, as the phrase goes, "get over" it. The incident rose like a mountain in the eventless life of age, and solitude, and idleness. Never since the war had Saint Basil's come so near to a student. The President was bitterly disappointed. He was piqued that his wife shared so little of his official regret. Yet, in her way, she was more agitated by the circumstance than he.

"Mercy! Who cares a wild orange for the *college*!" cried Mrs. Peyton, with unwonted spirit. "What I'm thinking of is the poor man. What possessed you, Mr. Peyton, not to bring him home to dinner? Poor fellow, in that old barn of a dirty chapel, all by himself, — *crying*, — and just look at it snow! I'm surprised at you, Mr. Peyton!"

President Peyton regarded his wife with the helplessness of a larger intellect confounded by the inadequacy of a lower. He remembered that kneeling figure, that cruel sob, that piteous, imperious wave of the hand, — a gesture which no *man* could have disobeyed. He felt that women could not understand certain phases of the superior delicacy of his own sex. But this consciousness practically did nothing toward putting him right with Mrs. Peyton;

who seemed to have the moral advantage over him all day. And the worst of it was that she told the boarder.

President Peyton retired to his study and locked the door, and there he spent the afternoon.

His uncomfortable thoughts took long and painful paths; these crossed a waste country, deviously, reaching nowhither. His memories returned upon the thinker like lost travelers. To what end, — oh, to what bitter end?

The old man rose, and paced his study restlessly. The high bookcases regarded him — mute friends, who knew the value of sympathetic silence. Over in a corner, between the English Poets and the German Metaphysics, the dictionaries stood, piled one above the other, — Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, Spanish, French, — upon an old dictionary-holder, homemade. The President's accustomed eye had not rested with speculation upon the dictionary-holder for many a day. Now, walking gloomily to and fro, he stopped before it, standing with his hands behind him, and moodily regarded the rude thing. With a certain ferocity he began to shove the lexicons about; tossed them over each other, and off upon the threadbare carpet. The dictionary-holder, revealed to the full light, seemed to shrink, as flesh would before a blow. It was a child's wooden high-chair.

Mrs. Peyton knocked at the study door while the President stood among his fallen dictionaries, and, moved by some unexpected impulse, he let her in. She had been crying. She apologized for troubling her husband.

"I — I'm so sorry, Mr. Peyton, to interrupt you, but I've been thinking" —

At this moment her eyes fell upon the scattered lexicons, and then upon the little old high-chair. Her face worked pitifully, but she did not cry any more; she seldom did cry before her husband.

She went up to the high-chair, and began to rub it tenderly with her handkerchief.

"It needed dusting," was all she said.

The two old people looked at each other. An embarrassed silence fell between them. Each heart beat violently to one thought, upon which the lips of both were sealed.

He had been a dear little fellow, — their only son, their only child. Everybody called him so. He was such a handsome boy! His beauty ruined him, perhaps. It is easier to punish an ugly child. His mother never could withstand him; he rode over her inert feminine being as he drove his pony over the Southern sand. This was her nature, and motherhood does not change, but only develops nature. The boy's father was severe enough to make up for it; he reasoned that he must make up for it, thus seeking justification for *his* nature, which turned to harshness, given a certain amount of provocation, as water does to ice, given thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit. The child had lived the life of a thermometer, alternately plunged in the snow and held down the register. It would not be exaggerating the case to say that his boyhood was one panorama of civil war. His home was a battle-field, neither more nor less. Scene upon scene rolled by before the averted eyes of these desolate old parents, — what hot words, what threats, what tears, what fears, what rebellion, mistake, and anguish! See defiance turning to sullen-

ness, and mischief grown disgrace ! Poor boy, — oh, poor boy ! . . .

If the President could have forgotten one bitter word, one icy rejoinder, any of those terrible conflicts when authority and dependence clashed, when the personal sense of power wrought parental love into a vulgar weapon ; one of the hours when he had struck home or struck down ; one of the moments when the child had writhed, or threatened, or fulfilled a threat ! But he had never forgotten. If she could forget one of the pitiful scenes when she hung like a shield between the sword of his father's anger and the bosom of the boy's blame ; the nights when she helped him upstairs, too sore a sight for any eye but his mother's to fall on and forgive ; the times when she dismissed a servant, or wore a shabby dress, or suffered for suitable food, that she might save money to pay his debts ; the hours when he laid his beautiful head upon her knee and cried like a very little fellow, and said he would never, never do so any more, and asked her to forgive him, and she stroked his curls, and wound them round her finger, and kissed them, and said, "You'll be a good boy *now*, Tony, won't you ?"

*Forgive* him ? She would have poured her soul and body into a crucible, and boiled them down to one red draught for the boy to drink, if so she might have given him a pleasure that she should have denied him, or purity that she had not educated in him. *Forget* ? She sometimes wished she could, or wondered if there are worlds where mothers can.

When the terrible time came, when the boy committed the unpardonable sin, whatever it was, — she

*had* almost forgotten what, there seemed so many, and that one looked to her so easy to forgive, — when his father expelled him, just as if he had been anybody else's son, — more quickly, she thought; with a hotter purpose, with less mercy, with a colder rage, — she had clung to her husband, and twined her arms about his neck, wishing he loved to have them there, and unclasped them, for she felt he did not, and dragged herself down from his heart to his knees, nay, to his feet, where she lay sobbing and prostrate, a piteous maternal figure, and pleaded for the boy.

"Mrs. Peyton," the President had said, "we will not discuss the subject any further."

And so it had happened. She came home from market, one day, with Juno before her carrying the basket (there was venison in the basket, that day, and celery, and Juno was cross and disrespectful), and she was very tired, and went into the study to lie down on the sofa, for the President was at lecture; and there, pinned upon the green sofa-cushion, — she had covered it since with black cut from one of the boy's old coats, — there she had found his little note: —

DEAR MOTHER [it ran], *Father has expelled me, and I hate him. Tell him I've gone to the devil, and say your prayers for me when you can conveniently. I'm sorry to make you feel badly, but I won't stand it.*

*Your loving son,*

ANTHONY PEYTON.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," repeated Mrs. Peyton,

that January afternoon, when she had dusted the high-chair. "Shall I put back the lexicons?"

"Allow me," said her husband courteously; "they are heavy for a lady."

When the little chair was covered out of sight, both of the old people drew long breaths; they felt better. They had lived alone together, now, for twenty years. It sometimes did seem a pity that they could not give each other more comfort.

"I wanted to say," began the wife timidly, "I came in to tell you—that I—that I can't forget him, for the life of me!"

"Forget *whom*, Mrs. Peyton?" demanded the President, with a hot flush upon his withered cheek.

"Why, that man in the college!"

"Oh! Yes. Ah. Indeed. Yes. To tell you the truth, my dear, I—I can't myself. It was a very painful circumstance."

He took a chair beside his wife, as he said this; an action unusual with him. She drew her own a little nearer to him, involuntarily, perhaps. They looked at each other drearily. Her blue lips trembled. Suddenly her composure forsook her, and her uncontrolled voice broke into a heart-moving wail:—

"Oh, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Peyton! Don't you scold me, for I can't help it, I can't, to save my soul! If you'd only *got* the poor fellow—or just found out what he was crying for—or asked him to come over and get warm—or, or—or *something*! For the Lord knows, Mr. Peyton, it's what we'd go on our knees to beg anybody else to do for—to do by"—

"MARIA!" cried President Peyton in a terrible voice. "For God's sake, hush!"



"I won't hush," protested the old lady, with incredible courage. "I won't be still, Anthony! You are my husband, and you were his father, and you shall listen to me! My trouble is your trouble and your sorrow is my sorrow, and your ways ought to be my ways, or my ways ought to be yours, and they're not, and it is n't right! I'm worn out with it — living so — never a word — not to speak his name, any more than if we'd never had a child — and he perhaps — Oh, I know he's dead! I know, I *know* he's dead! I have n't gone crazy — I've got it all clear in my head. I've gone over it and over it nights. I would n't have you think I think he's *living*, Mr. Peyton. But if he *had n't* died — wandering about; in cold weather; crawling into damp churches; crying before people — but Tony never cried before anybody but me. . . . Oh, Mr. Peyton, Mr. Peyton! It is n't for you and me ever to let a stranger go by without our gates. Supposing he were cold, or even hungry, Anthony — and homesick, and sorry, and felt sick — and somebody took him in. Oh, blessings on those people, wherever in this awful world they are, who took our darling in!"

"Maria! Maria!" repeated the President helplessly. He could not get beyond this unaccustomed word; he dwelt upon it in a kind of delirium. He was extremely agitated, and looked about him pitifully, like a man whose mind was leaving him. "I will go and find him," he said appealingly. "Shall I go and find the man, Maria? Will that please you?"

"You'll take cold," sobbed the old lady, whose mind had flopped to the practical and inexorable sur-

face of things the more heavily for its unusual imaginative flight. "You know you did n't put on your thick ones this morning."

But the President had already left her. Before she could gather herself to withstand him he was well out into the storm and far down the solitary street; beating about Heaven knew whither, to find the Lord knew what.

Now the Northern boarder was an idle woman, and diverted by the trifles which lease the tenements of empty minds. She sat at her window a great deal of the time, many hours of the vacant day. Whatever went on in the streets of Chester — nothing ever had gone on in Chester, to be sure — Miss Sparker was foredoomed to see. Her large, calm, vague face, with its two little pats of gray curls on either side, gazed from the windows of the Presidential guest-room with patient and mysterious persistence.

Miss Sparker sat at her window that afternoon. She had sat there since half-past two o'clock. An unfinished afghan lay across her knee. An uncut magazine lay upon the afghan. It was now well on toward five, very cold without and growing dark. The snow had blown on, but the wind held. The streets of Chester were dim and dreary. Miss Sparker did not light her lamp, that she might the better watch the few disconsolate figures that struggled up and down the road. It was time to put fresh light-wood on the discouraged fire, but Miss Sparker had become so much occupied that she forgot the fire, and sat on rigidly, with her face pressed to the window-pane.

"There!" cried Miss Sparker suddenly. "He's coming again!" She spoke so loud that Mrs. Peyton, drying her eyes in the study, heard the Northern boarder's voice, and went into the hall to see what she wanted.

"Mrs. Peyton!" called Miss Sparker, in evident excitement. "Are you there? Come up here — quick!"

"Just look at that man!" she added eagerly, when the old lady panted up to ask if Abraham or Juno had neglected anything. "No — *that* man — there! That man who's been hanging about this house half the afternoon."

"I don't see any man at all," protested Mrs. Peyton, beginning to tremble. "I must get my spectacles."

"Why, yes, you *do*!" insisted the boarder, with explosive Northern energy. "Who needs spectacles to see a *man*? Over there — behind the live-oak — by the northeast corner of the fence! *There!* . . . I told you so! That man has been haunting this place like a burglar for two hours. It has been very interesting. First he came up, and I thought he was going to ring the gate-bell. Then he changed his mind, and walked away. Then he came back on the other side of the street, and kind of sidled over and hung his head. Then he cleared out again. By and by he came up, and held up his head, and sort of made for the house, as if he'd do it if he died for it. And *then* the President came out. So the fellow gave him a look and put for it, and hid behind the live-oak, and scooted down Chester Street, and I thought that was the end of

him. But I thought I'd look a little longer, it was so interesting; and now *there*, Mrs. Peyton, as true as you live he's going away! He's given it up, and he's going away for good. He must be very wet. He seems cold, too. . . . Mrs. Peyton! Mrs. *Peyton*!"

But Mrs. Peyton had gone. With one little aged quaver of a cry, she had leaped down the stairs like a very young woman, dashed wide open the door, swung the hall light full in front of it, and, pausing only to pull her white knit shawl over her gray head, run straight out into the street.

There she stood uncertain, shaking like a person in a mortal chill. Out in the growing dark she could see nothing. The figure had vanished. She made her way along the fence and round behind the live-oak, where she spread out her searching hands. No one was there.

"Mrs. Peyton, Mrs. Peyton, are you *crazy*?" called the Northern boarder. Her window went up with a bang. "Come in this minute, or you'll get your death! The fellow is n't worth it — at your age!"

"Miss Sparker!" cried Mrs. Peyton, with unexampled authoritativeness, and she cried at the top of her feeble voice. "I am the mistress of my own house, and you are my guest. I command you — I command you, for God's sake, to keep *still*. . . . If there is anybody here, Miss Sparker, anybody, *anybody* who wants the shelter of my roof or the comfort of my home, he is welcome to it with all my heart and soul, and I've come out to say so. Is there anybody here?" she added, in a soft and brooding tone.

No answer reached her; and then, without another moment's hesitation, she stretched out both her arms as far as she could into the dusk, and quietly said:—

“Tony? Are you there?”

“Tony! Tony, *dear!*”

“Is it *you*, Tony? Don't be afraid, Tony. Your father sha'n't find fault with you . . . if you'll only come home. It's warm at home. It's very pleasant.”

“If it *is* you, Tony,” she said, more gently still, “I shouldn't think you'd keep your mother waiting in the wet, like this. You were always careful of your mother—and good to her, Tony. I'm afraid it is n't he. I thought perhaps it was. Tony? Mother's boy! Mother's sonny boy! *Tony!*”

Now, as she held herself thus, a piteous pleading figure in the dark, stretching out her empty arms, they closed suddenly, shaken and awed; for a miserable man, ragged, weather-stained, and wet, had walked straight into them and put his face upon her neck.

. . . . .  
She led him into the house without one word. She took his hand, and he let her, as if he had been a very little boy. She led him into the bright hall, where the lamp was set, and closed the door, and took off his shabby overcoat and rusty hat and hung them on the hat-tree, as if they had hung there every night for all these twenty years.

“I'll have Juno dry these wet things, dear,” she said quietly. She took him into the study, quite

naturally, and got him down before the fire; threw on more light-wood, knelt upon the hearth, and lifted his ragged, soaking feet upon the fender.

"We'll get off the shoes and stockings right away, Tony," she said. "There, dear! There! Nice to be home again, is n't it?"

They were sitting just so, when the old man came back, drenched and disconsolate. He pushed open the study door, with his hat in his hand.

"Maria," he began, "I could n't find the man. I'm sorry to disappoint you. I've been all over the village after him. But" —

Then and there his eyes fell upon the shabby, middle-aged figure shrinking in his study-chair. . . .

His wife held those soiled bare feet against her purple dress, and washed them as she knelt, and dried them. She kissed them, too, and laid her aged face upon them, and patted them with her thin hands.

"Your father is here, Tony," she said. "He is very glad to see you. He is standing right behind your chair. He wants to tell you how glad he is. Let him kiss you, Tony. It will comfort him."

The two men obeyed her like two disembodied spirits who did not know what else to do but to obey the supreme moral power of the situation.

No one spoke till afterward, and then the mother said, quite easily, that she would go and see to Tony's supper.

She ordered them after this like children, and neither man gainsaid her.

"Anthony," she said authoritatively, as soon as she could get the President into the hall alone, "do



as I bid you, for once in all our lives. Don't you ever — don't you *ever* ask him a single question ! It does n't make any difference what he's done. It is n't any matter where he's been. If he wants to tell, let him. If he does n't, we'll never bother him, — we'll never ask him — never !”

And they never did. They took him home and cherished him, and said no word, and let him keep his silence, as he chose. It was his own.

He slept that night in his own room and in his old bed. In the night he was heard pacing up and down, and his mother went to him, and remained with him for a time and quieted him.

He came to breakfast with them, next morning, by his own desire ; a timid, shaken man, abashed and strange. That was the Northern boarder's hour. Then, indeed, she was the comfort of the family ; for she talked about the weather in New York till the subject glowed with vivacity, and took upon itself a supreme value never known in conversational history before. This made Miss Sparker very happy.

When breakfast was over and the President went to prayers, he was surprised, and perhaps embarrassed, to see that a silent figure followed him. It looked shabby, and bowed, and sad.

“I thought I might help you ring the bell, father,” was all he said. It was the first time he had directly addressed his father. The old man answered, “Thank you, my son,” and they went to college side by side. The storm was over, and the day had melted, fair and warm. The light would have blinded them if the snow had not sunk away.

The younger man pulled at the bell-rope sturdily, and Saint Basil's voice rang far and wide : —

Stay — pray ! Home — to-day. To God — we pray. Home — to stay !

Then they went into the chapel together, and Anthony Peyton took his old seat, and knelt upon the dusty prayer-cushion, and bowed his head upon his hands, while the President of Saint Basil's read : —

*“ And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake ;  
That we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and  
sober life, To the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.”*

## SHUT IN.

It was the dreariest hour of the day in the Hope Hospital. It was the time when even in the South End of the city, where the afternoons are generous and the streets wide, the sun steps slowly off the floor of the ward and leans over the window-sills and draws his shining skirts around him, and gets away. It was the time before gas and after daylight; it was the time when the afternoon fever sets in; it was the time when the doctor does not come upon his next visit; it was the time when it ought to be supper-time and is n't; when one ought to feel better and does n't; when one wants to be at home and can't; when the hand-organ on Harmony Street plays "The Old Folks at Home," or "Toll the Bell," or "Bury me Deep," or other enlivening airs suited to enhance the cheerfulness of patients. It was the time when the Irishwoman in the next bed maintains that she cannot live till morning, or will die in the attempt to prove it; when the negress in the surgical ward, who has the serious operation and the funny temperament, sings:—

"Sambo was my dai-sy!"

as loud as she dares and louder than she is allowed; when the West End lady patroness in the private room, who always comes to her own hospital when she is ill, sends her maid on twenty errands in as

many minutes ; when the pious patient calls for her Bible and reads aloud from Lamentations ; when the patient with the cough is noisy, when the patient with the groan is groany, when the patient who weeps is teary, when the nurse looks out of the window, and wishes she were free to take a walk like other folks : the hour when it seems impossible to get well and objectionable to die and worse to live ; when the burden of all life is at its heaviest and the lot of the sick is at its hardest—it was half-past four o'clock. Besides, it was late in October and it was Boston.

It had been threatening rain all day ; and between half-past four and five the fall began. This was the time when the hospital ambulance slowly turned the corner of Washington Street, and rolled considerably up the hospital avenue with the new patient. Not that it was an event to receive a new patient at the Hope Hospital, which was a new enterprise, modern to the last detail, both of faith and practice, and representing the most progressive form of medical science ; paying some special attention to the comfort and the diversion of patients according to methods of its own. Hope Hospital was a popular place ; had not beds enough to receive the half of its applicants, and declined them by the hundreds every year. The institution is well known as one of the magnificent charities of one of the most generous towns in the world ; its patrons, though chiefly heavy tax-payers to the medical treatment of the State and the city, are compelled to support their personal medical faith out of their own pockets ; hence the limitations and the enthusiasms of Hope

Hospital. It has all the ardors of self-sacrifice, pugnacity, and reform.

It is crowded, as I said. But a patient from Michigan does not come every day. It was understood that the celebrity of her "case"—which means the extremity and obduracy of her sufferings—had admitted the patient from Michigan. The celebrated Dr. Von Moltke, of our own staff, had ordered preparations for the girl, who had appealed to his skill by a letter which she never would have dared to write had she known the man she wrote to; for this reason, perhaps, it touched him. The great man, brusque, savage when he felt like it, worn to the shreds of his nerve and his temper, doing the work of ten better-natured men, used to turning off patients as the editor of a popular magazine turns away spring verse, peremptorily required every attention paid to this obscure young woman.

"She suffers the torments of Hell," he said; "and she writes the letter of an angel in Heaven."

"The patient from Michigan, Dr. Hall," announced the janitor. "Miss Brand, sir."

The house physician bustled and blushed a little as he went out to receive Miss Brand. He was a delicate, boyish fellow, pale and fair, possessed of the excessive shyness not uncommon with young men, beginners in his profession. He bustled because he felt his unimportance; he blushed because he tried to feel at ease; he had not been at his post six months, and was not hardened yet to the sight of suffering women.

The patient from Michigan, when the door of the ambulance was opened, turned her face with a look

of keen expectance. She saw a patch of rainy sky from which the drops drizzled petulantly ; the brick façade of the hospital towered behind ; the brown grass-plots and dying red and yellow chrysanthemums in the well kept flower-beds spattered against each other. A marble woman, supposed to represent the art of healing as adapted to the limitations of a fountain, poured Cochituate and rain from a vase upon the forehead of a marble child with the general appearance of having his face washed and objecting to it. The foreground of this scenery was occupied by a dripping umbrella ; beneath it, a dripping young man. He stood in the storm with his hat off, looking gently into the ambulance.

"You don't look as I expected," observed the patient immediately. "I supposed you were black and big."

"Madam ?" expostulated the young man, blushing madly.

"Aren't you Dr. Von Moltke ?" inquired Miss Brand comfortably.

"Great heavens, no !" cried the house physician. "Why, I don't look any more like him than a — a turkey does like — like a man-of-war."

"Oh, I *beg* your pardon ! You see I'm so ignorant. I never was at a hospital. It didn't occur to me there was more than one doctor. How funny !"

Miss Brand laughed merrily ; the house physician laughed too ; he did not remember ever having seen a new patient laugh before ; they usually took it out in sadder ways, poor things, when the excitement of arrival succeeded the miseries of the journey.



"May I get out?" asked the patient from Michigan, with twinkling eyes. As Dr. Wentworth Hall looked into the ambulance from the Boston storm Miss Brand seemed to him to be all eyes. She had a dark, sweet face; it was a small face of the type which gives an impression of essential refinement; she had brown hair, which was brushed back from a high forehead beneath an invalid cap, over which she wore a crocheted woolen hood or rigolette of white; her stuff dress was brown and old and covered by an older brown cloak and shawl of brown and white check; her brown gloves were much mended and white at the fingers' ends. Evidently the patient from Michigan was not a rich person. Her cheeks were sunken, and the chiseling of intense suffering had been deeply carved about her mouth and forehead, between and above the eyes. Her eyes were uncommonly large and brilliant; of a color not easy to classify, at least between an umbrella and an ambulance; they looked at the young physician straight and strong; it was as if the soul of health shone out of the body of disease.

"I can't *get* out, you know," she added, laughing lightly. "I don't walk, I'm ashamed to say."

"Your pardon, Miss Brand!" pleaded the young doctor with a fresh, fierce blush. "You shall have every attention at once."

He relapsed into official distance immediately; atoning for the touch of human nature that the new patient had aroused in him by a preternatural gravity and impersonality of demeanor, which had the effect of making him look younger than ever; at which the patient's lips twitched disrespectfully as

they carried her up the walk and into the Hospital through the now driving and inhospitable rain.

Left to herself at last, oh, left alone at last! Who but the patient knows the mercilessness or the mercy of solitude? Hertha Brand took hers when she got it, as she took most things, in ways peculiar to herself.

All the preliminaries were over; she had done all the proper things; answered the inquiries as to the fatigue of her journey; been introduced to her nurse; received the visit of the assistant house physician, a young lady who regarded her with some perplexity beneath a set of bright blonde bangs and over a particularly stylish ruff; had attempted to eat her supper, and failed; had been ordered broth at eight, and promised to try; had inquired for Dr. Von Moltke, and been told that he would call to-morrow at half-past four; had said good-night to the house physician, who felt her pulse with an abashed and ladylike forefinger, and (being still young in his profession) expressed some impulsive sympathy with the evident exhaustion of the patient, who had the originality not to call his attention to it.

The assistant house physician awaited the house physician as he gently replaced the screen and left the bedside of the patient from Michigan.

Dr. Mary May and Dr. Hall walked together the length of the ward consulting in low tones. Her yellow bangs wore their professional aspect; her little mouth closed primly. She was ridiculously pretty! She was one of the sinuous blondes whom men sell

their minds and souls for. The young woman in spectacles, who stood six ahead of Dr. May in the medical college at graduation, was indiscreet enough to affirm that Mary May would never have received the appointment if she had not been a *stylish* girl; but it is possible that the valedictorian's vision was astigmatic, from over-study by candle-ends in the cold hall bedroom of the cheap boarding-house, where the gas was turned off at half-past nine.

"What do *you* think of the case, Doctor?" asked Mary May respectfully. It was her nature to say to the house physician, "What do *you* think?" after the great Von Moltke or others of the staff had visited a case. Wentworth Hall was a sensible little fellow; but he responded to this deference as an honest, good-natured dog does to a pat on the head; without knowing it.

"Spinal, I think," said Dr. Hall, with a little importance, which may be pardoned to him; he approved of Miss May, whose feminine nature had not been vitiated by her profession; she retained that graceful respect for the natural leaders of the vocation which —

"I didn't know but *you* would think it hysterical?" suggested Mary May.

Dr. Hall gave the blonde bangs a manly, direct look; not the personal, but the professional glance, that Mary May knew well, and liked less well.

"A woman with those eyes never has hysteria," he said, with unwonted decision.

"I should value your opinion, of course," mildly replied Mary May.

She leaned a trifle toward him in that instinctive

way little women have of turning toward not very tall men. She chatted about some pleasant things, laughing as she talked; she had beautiful teeth. Dr. Hall regarded her indulgently as they passed through the soundless doors that led from the ward into the outer world.

. . . Alone at last! Oh, alone at last! Miss Brand turned her face upon her pillow with the relief of the long sigh that no one can overhear. She was suffering — but let us not say what. So idly we are in the habit of saying, “Only God knows,” what it stands to reason nobody else can know, that the phrase should be relegated to the truisms. The chronic invalid is the most solitary being in the world. Between himself and life there rises a wall of stained glass. Because we of the outside can see through it here or there, we forget that we never break through it. We skim its surface like flies on the face of the globe that covers a piece of exquisite machinery; we are no nearer most of the time to the palpitating movements that throb within.

Hertha Brand lay upon her cot patiently. The screen closed in about her; the wall seemed to reach out across her as if the two clasped hands to hold her there. Beyond, the screen of the next patient rose and regarded her. There were two storks and a bulrush on her screen; there were two bulrushes and a stork upon her neighbor’s screen. The wall was white. The neighbor with the one stork coughed; the invisible neighbor at her head behind the two storks groaned; the padded doors of the long ward shut with their little muffled thuds as

nurses passed in or out. Once she heard a doctor's voice — Dr. Hall's — soothing a sobbing girl at the other end of the room. Another doctor's chimed in presently, on a high, inquisitive key ; that belonged to the professional bangs. Both ceased soon, and such silence as the presence of so much suffering renders possible fell upon Hope Hospital.

"This is my world," said Hertha Brand. "God created it."

She turned her head toward the wall, because she could turn nothing else ; she was too exhausted to move.

"It is something not to have to look at those two storks all night," she thought. "Really, I'm quite fortunate. The wall is such a pleasant change. And no paper ? That is the height of pathological civilization."

She thought of the paper in her little room in Michigan, that barren little room in which she had lain till every atom of it was hospitalized from her pathetic presence. That paper was chocolate and French green and black ; it had a pattern of lizards and locusts and figure fours and ciphers. The lizards were black and the locusts chocolate, and she had counted four thousand of them four thousand times four thousand times. Besides, there was a man hanging from a trellis (or to that effect) in a delicate shade of amber touched with red about the neck. In her delirious times she had prayed her step-mother for the love of mercy only to cut down that man.

"I wonder if Father misses me ?" thought the patient from Michigan. "Poor Father ! I didn't

make him very *much* trouble ; but he has the children, and *they* are all well."

"*Hertha Brand, Schoolhouse, Michigan. Aged twenty-nine. Has not walked for seven years.*"

The great Dr. Von Moltke paused here, and gave one unnecessary look (which in a man whose glances have a par value of, say, five dollars a minute or a dollar a wink, goes for something) at the patient whose symptoms he did the honor to record in his celebrated note-book. He was not an imaginative man, it is safe to say ; but a vision passed before the surgeon at that moment of what it might mean to be bed-ridden for seven years—in Schoolhouse, Michigan. He added to his superfluous look one superfluous question : —

"Is Schoolhouse a — large place ?"

"We have a population of twenty-one hundred. Twenty-one hundred and one, if you counted me," answered the patient from Michigan.

"*I propose* to count you. You shall go back as live as any of them. Now, Miss Brand, can you answer questions sensibly ? I have no time to waste. Understand that !"

"When you speak to me properly, sir, I will try," replied Miss Brand, with a snap of her strong eyes.

"H'm-m-m." The great man laid down his note-book and looked over it at the patient with a sort of infantile astonishment. He had never been answered in that manner by a little person. He was used to having full swing (and taking it) with his *clientèle*. Everybody was afraid of him ; he made use of the general deference as he did of any other universal pathological law.



"H'm-m!" said Dr. Von Moltke. "You'll get well!"

"I have no objections, sir."

"Then, if you please, madam, you will answer my questions as well as you know how?"

"Certainly; with pleasure."

"You have not walked for seven years?"

"Seven years."

"Accident or illness?"

"A railroad accident. I was jarred. After that we lay in the snow, and I froze before I was picked up."

"Pain ever since?"

"Ever since."

"Unrelieved?"

"Unrelieved."

"Here? and there? and there?"

"Yes, of course; and there."

"Insomnia?"

"Oh, yes."

"Serious?"

"It depends upon your standard. They said in the Inquisition that no torture brought people round to the Holy Catholic faith so quickly as enforced sleeplessness. I understand that. I think I would become a cannibal for a week's sleep."

"H'm-m-m. Yes. We'll stop all that, you understand. How did you get here?"

"My friends put me in charge of the conductor. The brakemen were very kind to me. I was passed on from road to road. There were some passengers — ladies — they saw to my meals. I got along. Everybody was kind to me. It was very interesting

I had my ticket; like a corpse. Did you know a corpse has to have a ticket like a live man? If he travels alone they fasten it on the box. I got along beautifully. I'm used to getting along, you know. The jar was the worst—and it took a good while to get here. That's all."

"Are you poor?"

"Oh, yes; of course I'm *poor*. Sickness is so different, I should think, when one can get things. The ladies of our church helped Father collect for the ticket to Boston. I never had to take charity before. I said I would n't, you know. But I did. You said you could cure me."

"Who takes care of you—in Schoolhouse, Michigan?"

"My step-mother does all she can. She is very good. She has five children under six years old."

"Noisy? Did you mind it much?"

"It was the only thing I ever cried about,—rainy days when they were all at home; and Sundays; and when I was worse, you know. Our boys wear copper-toed shoes. But *they* are all well. Father is well, too. So is she. You could n't expect well people to understand things, could you, Doctor? It is n't human to be sick. It is like being a hunch-back—it is deformed; nobody understands. Why, of course not. I would n't have you blame my people, Doctor. They are very kind to me. They meant to be. I *had* to go without things. There was n't anybody to look after *me*. Why, *I* was sick!—I have read about wheeled-chairs. I never saw one till I came here. I have wanted one for seven years. But I got along nicely. Oh, I got along!"

"Can you read?"

"Sometimes. I had to be in a dark room; but that only lasted three years. Sometimes I can read half an hour a day, now. It is such a comfort."

"Can you sew? Play games? Receive visits? How have you occupied your time?"

"I can't use my arms, you know. One year I crocheted a tidy; but I had to give it up. And then my room was so cold. We could n't afford a fire; the heat came in from the sitting-room. The door had to be kept open. In cold weather I had to keep my arms under the bed-clothes to keep warm. But I play dominoes with the boys sometimes. But boys jar the bed so, you know. I can't talk very long at one time — and people stay a good while, of course. People came to see me. But they *all* came Sundays and *always* at four o'clock, after church. That hurt me, you see. I had to stop."

"How in — Michigan, *have* you occupied these seven years, Miss Brand?"

The invalid's large eyes narrowed and melted; a look came into them which the surgeon could not diagnose; it was not described upon the pages of any of his volumes of therapeutics. He did not recall having noticed it as recorded even in the original French or German.

"You would n't understand, I think," she said softly.

"Then enlighten me!" commanded the physician peremptorily.

"Why, I have — prayed a good deal; if you insist on knowing."

"*Prayed?* Poor occupation! Worst thing in the world for you!"

"I had n't anything else to do," said Hertha Brand simply. "There was no harm in it, was there? It helped me; that was all."

The surgeon gave the patient from Michigan one more unnecessary look. It was a piercing look, long and grave. He did not smile. He perceived that he had a new "case" upon his distinguished note-book; which he shut with a snap, and said he would call to-morrow morning.

Now when he had gone some yards away, Dr. Von Moltke halted in his resounding stride and returned to the bedside of the patient from Michigan. This was a phenomenon. The surgeon was a man who never returned to a patient when the visit was done. From end to end of the ward, the eyes of the sick stirred as the bodies of well people move toward an accident or incident in the street. The Irishwoman beyond the storks coughed coquettishly to attract the great man's attention to her fatal condition. The religious case laid down her Bible and groaned appealingly. But the surgical case said nothing funny — having been carried to the Morgue an hour before. As for Dr. Mary May, she raised her pretty eyebrows inquiringly to Dr. Hall.

"You are to get *well*, you understand!" exploded Von Moltke fiercely. "There's to be no nonsense about it. We will send you home a well woman."

"Thank you, sir," said Hertha Brand gently. "I have heard doctors say that before."

"Have you ever heard ME say it before?" demanded Von Moltke. Over his large face, like an electric reflection, passed a white light of rage; he was called magnificent when he was angry. Miss

Brand laughed. It was an inconceivable irreverence, but she did — she laughed.

“She shows fight,” thought the medical tyrant; “she’ll do. There’s no scare in her.” But he said nothing to the fragile rebel; he never complimented the sick; he regarded her intently, bowed mightily, and left the ward like a muzzled cyclone.

“She’ll fall in love with him,” thought the house physician. “They generally do.”

“Do *you* call Dr. Von Moltke a handsome man?” asked Mary May confidingly. “I don’t, myself.”

Now Christmas week came to Hope Hospital after all. One hardly expected it. It seemed one of the things that must pass by the inmates of that afflicted place — like health, or joy itself. Out in the world, beyond the dead chrysanthemums, beyond the marble woman in the fountain, who washed the marble boy’s face with icicles; in the well, live, stirring, striving world Christmas might feel at home; like a heart among its kindred; but here —

Yet here there really was a delightful stir. Hertha Brand explained to the West End patroness, who, it seemed, represented the society with the short name, how delightful it was. The pious patient had finished Lamentations, and was reading aloud the beautiful tale of the Star in the East. To-day she had forgotten to read her Bible aloud at all; but had wept joyfully to herself over the Apocalypse, because her little granddaughter had sent her some crocheted mittens of a brilliant solferino color edged with blue. The Irishwoman had given up dying for a day or two; the priest himself had made her a

Christmas call, and her son, a young gentleman consisting chiefly of freckles and an odor of South End livery stables, had brought her a paper of peanuts and a pound of red rock-candy.

"She has n't a tooth in her head," merrily explained Miss Brand; "but she is perfectly happy. Everybody thinks of everybody, and *everybody* thinks of the sick. A hospital is the jolliest place I ever spent Christmas in in all my life. Christmas cards flood us like pellets; and as for lace bags with mixed candy in them" —

"I represent the 'Shut-in Society,'" interrupted the lady patroness suavely. "I always make it a point to visit the hospitals at Christmas. Shall I find something suitable for your case in our list of publications?"

"I know your Society," said Miss Brand unexpectedly. "It's an excellent thing. If I ever get well, I am going to try to improve on it. You have the grandest chances of any association in this country, and I don't wholly like the way you use them. Excuse me, madam, — I may have had no fair experience, — but it seems to me you give one too many things of one kind. Now, in three years I have had sent to me" — she counted on her thin fingers — "so many tracts, so many leaflets, and three Testaments, and nothing else. It just so happened, perhaps, but they were *all* religious things. It seems ungrateful to mention it, when people mean so kindly. But truly, madam, I think something not quite so serious now and then would be a good thing, don't you?"

"You are not a religious woman, perhaps?" inquired the visitor, politely.



"I hope so, madam; I try to be. That is why I object to your methods. When I am President of your Society I sha'n't slight the Bible, but I shall add Dickens, and Mark Twain, and Frank Stockton, and 'Happy Thoughts,' and 'Alice in Wonderland,' and Edward Lear's 'Nonsense,' and oh, madam, in Heaven's name, something to make us smile! To make us *smile*! We sha'n't pray any the less for it. No fear of our neglecting the other world. Why, it's all we've *got*. If you'll only try to make this one more tolerable, you'll do us the best turn in the power of all the societies on earth to do the sick! Oh, *amuse* us — amuse us if you can!"

"I never was an invalid," replied the visitor, very prettily. "Perhaps you are right. I only have fevers now and then. You ought to have the wisdom of your experience. It seems a hard one."

"It is the hardest one in the hospital," said the house physician to the representative of the "Shut-ins;" "and if she were to revolutionize charity to the sick as she has done this ward, the world would be made over, madam, shortly. She has hardly been here two months. She is the joy of this place already, madam. She is the strength of it, she is the comfort of it, she is the pluck and spirit and fun and hope of it. There is n't a patient in the ward who does n't love her. There is n't a doctor here who does n't respect her. She thinks less of herself and more of other people than any sick person I ever knew. She has a remarkable nature. If she gives you any advice about the treatment of invalids, you'll be wise if you listen to it, in *my* opinion. When Dr. Von Moltke is n't here, I offer my opinion some-

times," added the house physician, with a frank, fine smile he had which was charming.

"That poor girl," continued Dr. Hall, with a shade upon his sensitive face, "is to undergo — within five days — on holiday week — at the desire of the Consulting Staff — one of the deadliest operations known to surgical history. She did n't tell you, did she? I thought not. Most of us make more fuss over filling a tooth. She is superb. She is supreme. Good-morning, madam. Yes? I wish you *would* bring her some flowers on New Year's Day — if she lives so long. They're better than daily texts for a case like hers. I don't know how it happens; those people of hers must be very neglectful. Nobody sent her anything on Christmas — not even a card; forgot her, I suppose; she never complained of it, but she looked sober when the Christmas mails came in. Most of the patients were remembered — little souvenirs — something. All she said was: 'Oh, they are all busy at home. They are all well. They don't understand what it is to be sick, and fifteen hundred miles from home. It's natural they should forget, Doctor. It's all right. I don't mean to mind it, Doctor. They love me just as much, you know.'"

"Poor girl!" murmured the visitor from the Shut-in Society; her eyes filled. "We will try to make it up to her," she said.

Dr. Hall returned to the bedside of Miss Brand; his face was glowing; their eyes met with a sudden sweet intelligence. The drama had moved on in two months.

Now the action had taken a tense and rapid character. Hertha Brand had distinguished herself;

she had *not* fallen in love with the great Dr. Von Moltke.

The young physician perceived this with a species of personal gratitude; he differed from Von Moltke radically about the case; in which, therefore, he took the more interest. Between himself and Hope Hospital's favorite patient a fine feeling, like a silken tie, had occurred. He called it sympathy. She called it friendship. She had a divine ease and unconsciousness with him. She had the invalid's sacred protection from misapprehension. She was shut in to her lot like a sweet nun into her cell. She was like the spirits in Heaven who neither marry nor are given in marriage. She regarded him trustfully. She leaned upon him with the piteous weakness of strength disabled. His fine quality pervaded her delicate being like an atmosphere.

"What day has he set for the operation?" asked Dr. Hall, abruptly.

"To-morrow at three," composedly said Hertha Brand.

"To-morrow? I did not think — but Von Moltke pushes things when his mind is set. I suppose he has explained to you the nature of the — risk?"

"Oh, yes. He seems to be an honorable man. He told me about it. He said it was my only chance. He ordered it. I am his patient. So I said I would do it. That's all."

"You understand," pursued the house physician, frowning, "that the removal of such a growth from the liver — assuming that his diagnosis is correct and that any such thing exists in your case — you understand, Miss Brand, that only one such instance

is known in medical history? You understand that only one surgeon has ever performed this — difficult — operation successfully? You understand that Von Moltke has never done it?”

“He thinks he can do what any other man can, I suppose,” quietly replied Miss Brand; “and that other patient lived. He had four tumors removed — without ether — and he lived.”

“He was a man,” shortly answered the house physician, “and an Arctic explorer; and Hellingpfeiffer of New York did it.”

A flush passed over the invalid’s pale and tender face; she did not turn her eyes toward the house physician, but her profile on the white pillow had a vivid consciousness, expressive, like language.

“I have trusted Dr. Von Moltke!” she said, quickly. “That is what I am here for. I have trusted him!”

“You may not know,” replied Wentworth Hall, in his turn not regarding her, “that there exists at the present time an intensifying conflict between surgery and other forms of medical treatment. There is a cultus — a tendency — on the one hand to the extreme measure. Everything goes to the knife. It is the first appeal. It ought to be the last; like the sword in human affairs. Gentler (and safer) measures exist; they should be tried first. The true treatment — the exact remedy — the ideal hygiene — these form our basis of hope and effort. Von Moltke is a surgeon. But,” added Wentworth Hall beneath his breath, “he is the first consulting power of this hospital. I am only the house physician.”

Hertha Brand turned her sweet face impulsively

toward him. Their eyes found each other now in a long look.

"What would happen," she asked, after a silence, "if it were known that you have — warned — that you have been so noble — that you have said to me what you have?"

"Oh, it would cost me my position, of course," he answered, quietly. "I have done an unprofessional act," he added in a lower tone. "I have" — he broke off in agitation, and turned his chair slightly away from her.

"Do you mean," insisted the patient, "that you object to the operation? That you consider it unnecessary? Even very dangerous? Possibly murderous?"

The house physician made no reply. Over his young, averted face the signs of a high struggle were moving, like the shadows from the wings of two spirits.

"Perhaps you don't even think that I *have* the trouble he wants to cut me up for?"

But Wentworth Hall kept silence still. Unintentionally, all but unconsciously, he had slipped into an extraordinary situation; the refinement of its complication gave it a kind of interest to which, because the refinement is so evident, we are not apt to attach the name of moral emergency; it may not the less deserve it. On the one hand, professional etiquette, ethics, honor itself, stood guard over the young man's next movement in this delicate game. All the promise of his life warned him. His fate held up a firm forefinger. His future hung upon a motion of his lips, nay, upon a glance of the eye.

On one side, the code of all his world, the glamour of assured success, the control of the customary view of things persuaded him. On the other, lay nothing but a helpless creature; the duty, the doubtful and difficult duty, of a well man toward a sick woman — that was all. He could not look at her. His fair face flushed. He felt his soul and body wrenched within him.

“Do you disagree with the diagnosis?” persisted Miss Brand, in a low, clear tone. “Do you think I need not undergo — all that? That I shall die? If I were your patient, would you not do it? If I were your patient, what *would* you do with me?”

The flush upon the house physician’s cheek gave place to a pallor that was almost pitiful; it aroused the pity of the doomed woman. She smiled upon him like a seraph; gently lifting her pain-pinched face.

“Poor fellow!” she said — “poor fellow. I will not ask you. Do not answer me. Never mind! It does n’t matter very much. Don’t trouble about it.”

“Miss Brand,” said Wentworth Hall, in a ringing voice, “I *shall* answer you. Look at me!”

She obeyed him; in her large eyes the outcry of life and death, of ignorance, helplessness, hopelessness, of all that appeals to the healer, and bewilders the sick; in his, the utter truth. It needed no word, and had none. His lips needed to do no treason to his hospital. But his eyes were true to her. She pressed his hand silently. He bowed and left her.

Dr. Mary May nestled toward him, as he turned away; his emotion was visible. She crooned over him, and told him how tired he looked. She was glo-



rious that morning; her well, young blood bounded in waves of brilliant color across her rounded cheek; she blossomed in this diseased place, the one flower of health and charm and delight. It was a rest to look at her. He did look at her; he always did. Hertha Brand could not see the look. She observed the motion patiently; she knew that he loved Mary May; she thought it natural; Dr. May was quite a well woman — and how pretty! Any man might love her. Friendship — compassion — these were not like that; it was her duty to be glad; she was glad; she thought of it as impersonally as a ghost might.

“God bless him!” she whispered, talking to herself as the solitary sick do; and gently turned her face away. The hand-organ on Harmony Street was playing. She lay and listened to it for quite a while. It was playing:—

“Let me alone,  
For my grief is my own!”

“Not undergo the *operation*?”

The great surgeon wheeled about like a pillar of fire; while he towered above the panting patient, he seemed to writhe, as a tall, living flame does.

“But every preparation is made! The Consulting Staff will be present. It is a very interesting *case*! I have telegraphed Hellingpfeiffer of New York to be present. . . . What do you mean?” he thundered.

“I — I am very — sorry, sir.”

For the first time Hertha Brand quailed before the celebrated tyrant. She had been so brave all her life! Perhaps her pluck had been her one little

adorable vanity ; she had always been called such a courageous invalid ! She had come up to the edge of the knife without wincing. Now she crawled away, like a deserter. She felt that the reputation of her life was gone ; the glory of her fate had departed from her ; she would pass for a coward all her days. And she had not a reason to give ; not one. She was dumb. For unpardonable weakness, for criminal ingratitude to the hospital that had cherished her, for vacillation disgraceful to a child who had an appointment at the dentist's, she must be known and remembered, as the well and the powerful remember the follies of the sick and the weak. And yet by all that was honorable in woman or in patient she must be dumb.

"I have — a reason," she panted, "I cannot explain. I do not expect to be understood. I know I must seem — unpardonable. Forgive me, Doctor ! You have been good to me. I have trusted you. You have helped me ; you have given me my only hope of life. I thank you, Doctor. I know how kindly you mean by me, but oh, forgive me ! I cannot undergo the operation to-morrow. I ask a fortnight's reprieve — a week's " —

"Not a week !" blazed the angry surgeon. "Busy men like this Consulting Staff can't dance attendance on the whims of sick girls — of charity patients," he began to say — he did so far forget himself ; he was the angriest man in his profession in Boston that holiday week ; then he stopped, for he felt ashamed ; he looked at her refined, patient, piteous profile, and he felt ashamed. He pushed his chair back fiercely.

"I have nothing more to say to you, Miss Brand !

I abandon the case! Hope Hospital abandons the case! You are at liberty to return to Schoolhouse, Michigan — and the village doctor — whenever you choose! Good-morning, madam!” —

“Stay a minute,” urged Hertha Brand, who had now regained her composure. “I don’t blame you, Dr. Von Moltke, for being displeased with me. I have no reasons — that I am at liberty to give — suitable to account for my conduct in your eyes. But they told me women fell in love with you, sir! I was expected to do it myself, I believe. How is it, Doctor? Tell me! How can a woman *love* a man who blackguards a patient? A — charity patient, too — as you said.”

But the great surgeon and his great wrath had thundered from the ward. The exhausted patient turned upon her cot, and fainted roundly, which, under the circumstances, was a luxury she had no reason to expect, not being a fainting woman.

She felt better for this period of unconsciousness, so rare in her life of suffering that she looked upon it gratefully, and in the evening, when she was left to herself, she thought it all over and bravely laid her pitiful plans. She must go back. Hope Hospital could shelter her despair no longer. She would go back to Schoolhouse, Michigan; she would crawl into her own old bed in the little bedroom where she had lain for seven years. The door would be open to let in what they called the heat from the sitting-room fire; she would put her arms under the clothes to keep warm; the boys with their copper-toed shoes would come stamping in; her mother would bring her breakfast and ask her

how she felt this morning ; her father would say it was a pity to have had all this *expense* and come home as bad as ever ; the family would gossip over her ; the neighbors would call upon her Sunday afternoons at four o'clock ; she would lie and look at the green and chocolate paper ; she would count the man hanging from the trellis four thousand times four thousand times.

She had written home, poor thing, though hearing nothing, — a Christmas letter, a farewell letter touchingly full of love and gratitude, when one considered how little she had to be grateful for ; a letter telling them about the crisis, and how it would be all over when they got this, either for well or ill ; she had left one or two of her little books and the trifles of her barren life to “those who loved her,” her father and one of the boys who kissed her when he played dominoes, and a neighbor or so, who raised the money for the ticket on to Boston.

She had said her cheerful little good-by words, in case it went wrong with her ; but had told them she was sure it would go right, and that she should come home to them a well creature — a live woman ; the cured patient of Hope Hospital ; “their loving, happy, hopeful Hertha.” Thus she had signed and sealed and sent her Christmas letter home. And she had added a postscript and asked her old minister to pray for her ; that was the way one did in Schoolhouse, Michigan. She liked the old minister, and she was tired of her own prayers ; they seemed to have all betrayed her lately. She had the not uncommon experience of unselfish invalids, that for years she had scarcely prayed for herself, only for

other people; people she knew who suffered or needed; her sacred inner life had been full of them, and theirs. Since she came to Hope Hospital she had prayed sometimes for herself, for cure, for life itself. It had seemed natural here. And what had come to her? Misled! misled! All on the wrong path; all a mistake; going back to Michigan! Uncured — incurable. “Now,” thought Hertha Brand, with her healthy good sense, “either I have prayed too much for myself, or not enough. One or the other. I wonder which. . . . Lord,” she cried, “tell me!” She did not often cry. But she began to sob now, behind the screen with the two storks and the bulrush. She folded her wasted hands like a child, and so, in this manner, prayed she: —

“God! What shall I do? Lord God, what shall *I do*? I am a sick woman — weak — incurable — I have been in bed for seven years. I suffer all the time. Thou Almighty! put thy strength upon me. Even thine, upon even *me*. Give me thy nerve, thy good sense, thy power of deciding what to do. I am in a hard place — oh, I am in a tough place. I have lost my pluck, I am worn out. I dread the journey back to Michigan — it was so hard. I’m afraid they won’t be very glad to see me, I am so expensive to them. It doesn’t seem to me as if I *could* go back into that room — that cold room — and that wall-paper — and lie there for seven years to come! Great God! it may be seventeen; it might be twenty-seven — oh, or more than that! I’m only twenty-nine years old. I may live to be an old woman. . . . It seems as if I could not, *could* not bear it. Dear Lord, I will bear it if I must; I will try, — oh, I will

try hard. But if there *is* any way I can be told, if I can be shown what to do to get better, or if only just what I *ought* to do, whether I can get better or not—or if I ought to have gone through that operation—just a sign! I pray thee have mercy upon me, for I won't ask anything unreasonable, not any miracle nor silly favor done to me—but just a sign! Almighty God, thou Healer of the souls and the bodies of all mankind! Thou great Physician of all sick people” . . .

“Fire! Oh, fire, *fire!*”

This cry so terrible in all human homes, so hideous in the hospital for the helpless sick, crashed into Hertha Brand's prayer, and rang and resounded through the ward. Wails of horror and pleas for mercy faltered through the wretched place. In an instant a panic had set in. Worse than fire threatened. Hertha pushed aside her screen and looked quietly out; she was so used to being helpless, and had so often thought how she would act in case of fire, that it came quite natural to her to be self-possessed. She saw it all in an instant. And this was what she saw.

Dr. Mary May was going to a party that night. It was her “evening off.” She had come into the ward on some errand, real or apparent, at the bedside of the Irishwoman who never lived till morning; and she had come, being hurried, and about to get into her wraps for her carriage, in her thin evening dress.

She had brought, contrary to custom, a lighted candle in her hand, which she had set down upon the table by the Irishwoman's cot. A nurse had



opened a door suddenly, — the wind blew a gale that night, — the ventilators were open, a violent draught had swept Mary May's blue lace draperies into the flame of the candle. (By the way, it was a blue candle, to match her dress — but Dr. Hall was out.) The amount of it was that Mary May was in a blaze. The cry of Fire! came from her own professional lips; and the panic among the sick followed, as it must. No doctor was in the room. The only nurses stood like paralytics. So poor Mary May burned on. Then swifter than fire flashed through the bedridden invalid's being, these words: —

“She will burn to death before my eyes. They have all lost their wits. Nobody will touch her. *And he loves her.*”

In an instant, God knew how, she had done the deed. In a moment, she who had not put her foot upon the ground for seven years had sprung, had dashed, had reeled upon the burning girl, and dragging the blankets off her cot, rolled them about and about the blue lace figure, smothered down the blaze, and pushed the pretty victim to the ground, where strong arms of nurses gathered her, and so the thing was done. Saved and sobbing, Mary May was carried off to have her burns dressed — they were not important, but they smarted. Dr. Hall carried her. She forgot to thank Miss Brand.

In the uproar of the startled ward Hertha Brand stood in her white night-dress, radiant, illuminated, like the body in the sketch of William Blake that rises, rapturous, to meet his soul at the Resurrection Day. Patients cried out to her, but she heard nothing. Many blessed her, but she did not respond to

their blessing. Nurses gathered about her and chattered, praising her ; but she did not answer.

“Howly Mother, will they lave her sthandin’ on her blissid bare feet, begorra !” cried the Irish-woman. “Bedad, they would n’t do so much by a *rale* corruks in Ireland !”

“Come,” said her own nurse, gently ; “let us carry you back to bed.”

“*Carry* me !” cried the incurable invalid. She put one bare foot before the other, walked out as she was, straight into the middle of the ward, turned, and steadily, like a soldier, marched back to bed. When she got there, she sank upon her knees, and the nurse, for she dared not, did not touch her. She only put a coverlet softly across the shoulders of her patient’s night-dress, and, being fond of Miss Brand, knelt down and prayed beside her.

But the religious patient, who, before the fire, had been reading the Imprecatory Psalms, sat up in bed like a Christian woman, and began to sing : —

“*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow !*”

It is a touching fact that the sick people in the ward where Hertha Brand was so beloved did join the religious patient, and sang the Doxology roundly, from end to end.

“I *thought* it was hysterics,” said Mary May, sweetly, when she heard about it all.

She had the indiscretion to say this to Dr. Hall. He regarded her in the strong silence of a man to whose feeling for herself a woman has given the final, fatal touch. There was nothing to be said. He prescribed kindly for Dr. May ; and, with bowed head,

and hands clasped, he came to the bedside of the patient from Michigan.

He found her sitting upon her cot, dressed in her brown dress and little invalid cap, trying to mend her old brown gloves. She looked very pale, and sweet, and happy.

"I am getting ready," she said, "to go back to Michigan."

But Wentworth Hall shook his head.

"You will stay," he said — "with me."

"With *you*?"

"I shall take you to my mother's house. You shall be nursed and cared for. I shall make you a well woman. You have trusted me — a young, unknown practitioner — against Von Moltke's terrible reputation. I shall justify your trust, please God; as you, thank God, have justified my diagnosis. Some time — some other time," he said in great agitation, "if you care for me — enough — or learn to — we will see. . . . You have grown unbearably dear to me, Hertha Brand. I don't know what I am to do about it. You brave, sweet girl! You plucky — glorious — tender — you" —

"Oh, *hush*!" cried Hertha Brand.

One thing remained to do; and he did it. Dr. Wentworth Hall went like a man to the great and terrible surgeon. He told him all; he kept back no part of the professional price. It was easier, perhaps, because he could afford to, now; a man could afford anything who had beaten Von Moltke on diagnosis. But let us believe (as she did who trusted him) that he would have done it at all events.

"I have broken the code of professional etiquette, Dr. Von Moltke," said the young man, with proud humility, "for the sake of a suffering patient. That, unfortunately, is unpardonable in our vocation. I realize what my duty is. I will leave Hope Hospital as soon as you can supply my place. Miss Brand will accompany me — to my mother's home. I shall take her case immediately under my supervision, and treat it on my own theory. If I can cure her and win her — or, if I can win her, whether I cure her or not — I shall make her my wife. It rests with herself. I have no more to say. It is not a case we need to discuss, I think. My respect for yourself" —

"Never mind *your* respect for *me*!" roared the great man. "I'm going to see that girl!"

He came to her — tame as a cosset. His fine face was melted; like hard metal in a white heat. He found her sitting in an easy-chair before an open fire at the end of the ward. She rose and advanced to greet him. He held out his large, white hands, and took her fragile one in both of his. He began immediately, without the superfluous, as his way was.

"I have heard of such cases. We had a patient here once for three years. We all pronounced her incurable with spinal disease. She became engaged to the janitor, and got well in three weeks. Don't blush. I don't locate this case on that line. There are others on record. You come under the class of cure by shocks. The shock was the battery to you. You might have fooled with electricity for years and nothing come of it. You needed the battery to body *and* mind. You got it, somehow. There

was a motive there. I don't propose to dissect that. But it may be the Law of Sacrifice for aught I know. It is a powerful pathological agent.

"Miss Brand, I was wrong. I made a mistake in diagnosis. I lost my temper with you. . . . I beg your *par-don*."

He uttered the last words with the great gentleness of great strength; and, when he went, he left her in tears.

They passed out of the hospital together, — the dismissed patient and the house physician resigned. She walked to the carriage leaning upon his arm. The nurses and the convalescent patients gathered affectionately to see her go. Mary May was not visible, being still obliged to nurse a scar beneath her bright blonde bangs.

It was a gentle day, warm and fair. The hand-organ on Harmony Street was playing : —

"I'd shelter thee! I'd shelter thee!"

As Hertha passed by the chrysanthemum bushes, where the snow had melted from the fine brown stalks, and past the marble woman who washed the marble boy's face with nothing less than the divine sunshine to-day; as they passed on together out of Hope Hospital into the free life, she was so silent that he turned and asked her how it was with her, thinking, perhaps, she might be lost in tender thoughts.

"When I am well," she whispered, "oh, when I am a *well* woman, I shall give my life itself to the sick. I will make their world all over. I will make

it what nobody else has ever made it. I will do — God teach me,” she added humbly, “what I shall do. No well person knows. I am so glad I have suffered. I thank God I understand.”

“But,” pleaded the young man, ruefully, “what part of your life is to be left for me?”

“The first choice,” she said, “and the best. Will that do?”

He lifted her into the carriage, trembling more than she. It was a close carriage, and he drew the curtains. As they left Hope Hospital for the living world where joy replaces hope, and energy supercedes patience, and sacrifice and love and delight are one — their lips met. Love radiantly undertook to finish the “case” that trust and courage had begun.

“Together,” he cried, “we will cure the world!”

But the hand-organ on Harmony Street put in madly at that moment: —

“Oh, 't is Love, 't is Love, 't is Love, that makes the world go round!”

And it was pretty in the agent of the “Shut Ins” to remember to send her flowers on New Year’s Day — at his mother’s house.



## JACK THE FISHERMAN.

### I.

JACK was a Fairharbor boy. This might be to say any of several things ; but it is at least sure to say one, — he was a fisherman, and the son of a fisherman.

When people of another sort than Jack's have told their earthly story through, the biography, the memorial, the obituary remains. Our poet, preacher, healer, politician, and the rest pass on to this polite sequel which society has ordained for human existence. When Jack dies, he stops. We find the fisherman squeezed into some corner of the accident column : "Washed overboard," or "Lost in the fog," and that is the whole of it. He ends just there. There is no more Jack. No fellow-members in the Society for Something-or-Nothing pass resolutions to his credit and the consolation of his family. No funeral discourse is preached over him and privately printed at the request of the parishioners. The columns of the religious weekly to which he did not subscribe contain no obituary sketches signed by the initials of friends not thought to be too afflicted to speak a good word for a dead man. From the press of the neighboring city no thin memorial volume sacred to his virtues and stone-blind to his defects

shall ever issue. Jack needs a biographer. Such the writer of this sketch would fain aspire to be.

Jack was born at sea. His father was bringing his mother home from a visit at a half-sister's in Nova Scotia, for Jack's mother was one of those homesick, clannish people who pine without their relations as much as some of us pine with ours; and even a half-sister was worth more to her in her fanciful and feeble condition than a whole one is sure to be to bolder souls.

She had made her visit at her half-sister's, and they had talked over receipts, and compared yeast, and cut out baby-things, and turned dresses, and dyed flannel, and gone to prayer-meetings together; and Jack's mother was coming home, partly because Jack's father came for her, and partly because he happened to come sober, which was a great point, and partly because the schooner had to sail, which was another, — she was coming home, at all events, when a gale struck them. It was an ugly blow. The little two-masted vessel swamped, in short, at midnight of a moonlit night, off the coast, just the other side of seeing Cape Ann light. The crew were picked up by a three-master, and taken home. Aboard the three-master, in fright and chill and storm, the little boy was born. They always said that he was born in Fairharbor. In fact, he was born rounding Eastern Point. "The toughest place to be borned in, this side o' Torment," Jack's father said. But Jack's mother said nothing at all.

Jack's father kept sober till he got the mother and the child safely into the little crumbling, gray cottage in half of whose meagre dimensions the fam-

ily kept up the illusion which they called home. Then, for truth compels me, I must state that Jack's father went straightway out upon what, in even less obscure circles than his, it is customary to call "a tear." There seems to be something in the savage, incisive fitness of this word which has over-ridden all mere distinctions of class or culture, and must ultimately make it a classic in the language. "I've stood it long as I ken stand, and I'm goin' on a tear, — I'm a-goin' on a *netarnal* tear," said Jack's father to his oldest dory-mate, a fellow he had a feeling for, much as you would for an oar you had handled a good many years; or perhaps a sail that you were used to, and had patched and watched, and knew the cracks in it, and the color of it, and when it was likely to give way, and whereabouts it would hold.

In fact, that proved to be, in deed and truth, an eternal tear for Jack's father. Drunk as a fisherman could be, — and that is saying a good deal, — he reshipped that night, knowing not whither nor why, nor indeed knowing that the deed was done; and when he came to himself he was twelve hours out, on his way to the Banks of Newfoundland; and the young mother, with her baby on her arm, looked out of the frosty window over the foot of her old bedstead, and watched for him to come, and did not like to tell the neighbors that she was short of fuel.

She was used to waiting — women are; Fairharbor women always are. But she had never waited so long before. And when, at the end of her waiting, the old dory-mate came in one night and told her that it happened falling from the mast because

he was not sober enough to be up there, Jack's mother said she had always expected it. But she had not expected it, all the same. We never expect trouble, we only fear it. And she had put the baby on the edge of the bed and got upon her knees upon the floor, and laid her face on the baby, and tried to say her prayers, — for she was a pious little woman, not knowing any better, — but found she could not pray, she cried so. And the old dory-mate told her not to try, but to cry as hard as she could. And she told him he was very kind; and so she did. For she was fond of her husband although he got drunk, — because he got drunk, one is tempted to say. Her heart had gone the way of the hearts of drunkards' wives: she loved in proportion to her misery, and gave on equation with what she lost. All the woman in her mothered her husband when she could no longer wifely worship him. When he died she felt as if she had lost her eldest child. So, as I say, she kneeled with her face on the baby, and cried as if she had been the blesseddest of wives. Afterward she thought of this with self-reproach. She said one day to the old dory-mate: —

“When my trouble came, I did not pray to God. I'd ought to have. But I only cried at Him.”

Jack had come into the world in a storm, and he began it stormily. He was a big, roaring baby, and he became a restless boy. His mother's gentle and unmodified femininity was helpless before the problem of this wholly masculine little being. She said Jack needed a man to manage him. He smoked at six; he lived in the stables and on the wharves at eight; he came when he got ready, and went when

he pleased; he obeyed when he felt like it, and when he was punished, he kicked. Once, in an imaginative moment, he bit her.

She sent him to pack mackerel, for they were put to it to keep soul and body together, and he brought home such habits of speech as even the Fairharbor woman had never heard. From her little boy, her baby, — not yet old enough to be out of short trousers, and scarcely out of little sacks, had he been *yours*, my Lady, at the pretty age when one still fastens lace collars round their necks, and has them under shelter by dark, and hears their prayers, and challenges the breath of heaven lest it blow too rudely on some delicate forming fibre of soul or body, — from her little boy, at eight years old, the mother first learned the abysses of vulgarity in a seaport town.

It must be admitted that her education in this respect had been defective. She had always been one of the women in whose presence her neighbors did not speak too carelessly.

But Jack's mother had the kind of eyes which do not see mire, — the meek, religious, deep-blue eye which even growing sons respect while they strike the tears from it. At his worst Jack regarded her as a species of sacred fact, much like heaven or a hymn. Sometimes on Sunday nights he stayed at home with her; he liked to hear her sing. She sang "Rock of Ages" in her best black alpaca, with her work-worn hands crossed upon the gingham apron which she put on to save the dress.

But ah, she said, Jack needed a man to manage him. And one day when she said this, in spite of

her gentle unconsciousness, or because of it, the old dory-mate to whom she said it said he thought so too, and that if she had no objections he would like to be that man.

And the Fairharbor widow, who had never thought of such a thing, said she did n't know as she had; for nobody knew, she said, how near to starving they had come; and it was something to have a sober man. So, on this reasonable basis, Jack acquired a step-father, and his step-father sent him straightway to the Grand Banks.

He meant it well enough, and perhaps it made no difference in the end. But Jack was a little fellow to go fishing, — only ten. His first voyage was hard: it was a March voyage; he got badly frostbitten, and the skipper was rough. He was knocked about a good deal, and had the measles by himself in his berth; and the men said they did n't know they had brought a baby to the Banks, for they were very busy; and Jack lay and cried a little, and thought about his mother, and wished he had n't kicked her, but forgot it when he got well. So he swaggered about among the men, as a boy does when he is the only one in a crew, and aped their talk, and shared their grog, and did their hard work, and learned their songs, and came home with the early stages of moral ossification as well set in upon his little heart as a ten-year-old heart allows.

The next voyage did not mend the matter; nor the next. And though the old dory-mate was an honest fellow, he had been more successful as a dory-mate than he was as a step-father. He and Jack did not "get on." Sometimes Jack's mother wondered



if he *had* needed a man to manage him ; but she never said so. She was a good wife, and she had fuel enough, now ; she only kissed Jack and said she meant it for the best, and then she went away and sang “Rock of Ages” to the tune of Martyn, very slowly and quite on the wrong key. It seemed to make her feel better, poor thing. Jack sometimes wondered why.

When he was twelve years old he came home from a winter voyage one night, and got his pay for his share, — boy’s pay, yet, for a boy’s share ; but bigger than it used to be, — and did not go home first, but went rollicking off with a crowd of Portuguese. It was a Sunday night, and his mother was expecting him, for she knew the boat was in. His step-father expected him too, — and his money ; and Jack knew that. His mother had been sick, but Jack did not know that ; she had been very sick, and had asked for him a great deal. There had been a baby, — born dead while its father was off-shore after cod, — and it had been very cold weather ; and something had gone wrong.

At midnight of that night some one knocked at the door of the crumbling cottage. The step-father opened it ; he looked pale and agitated. Some boys were there in a confused group ; they bore what seemed to be a lifeless body on a drag, or bob-sled ; it was Jack, dead drunk.

It was the first time, — he was only twelve, — and one of the Fairharbor boys took the pipe from his mouth to explain.

“He was trapped by an *I*-talian, and they ’ve stole every cent off him, ’n’ kicked him out, ’n’ lef’ him,

stranded like a monk-fish, so me and the other fellows we borried a sled and brung him home, for we thought his mother 'd rather. He ain't dead, but he's just as drunk as if he was sixty!"

The Fairharbor boy mentioned this circumstance with a kind of abnormal pride, as if such superior maturity were a point for a comrade to make note of. But Jack's step-father went out softly, and shut the door, and said:—

"Look here, boys,— help me in with him, will you? Not *that* way. His mother's in there. She died an hour ago."

## II.

And so the curse of his heredity came upon him. She never knew, thank Heaven. Her knowledge would have been a kind of terrible fore-omniscience, if she had. She would have had no hope for him from that hour. Her experience would have left her no illusions. The drunkard's wife would have educated the drunkard's mother too "liberally" for that. She would have taken in the whole scope and detail of the future in one midnight moment's breadth, as a problem in the higher mathematics may rest upon the width of a geometrical point. But she did not know. We say — I mean, it is our fashion of saying — that she did not know. God was merciful. She had asked for Jack, it seemed, over and over, but did not complain of him for not coming; she never complained of Jack. She said the poor boy must have stayed somewhere to have a pleasant time; and she said they were to give her love to him,

if he came in while she was asleep. And then she asked her husband to sing "Rock of Ages" for her, because she did not feel very strong. He could n't sing, — more than a halibut, poor fellow; but he did not like to disappoint her, for he thought she looked what he called "miser'ble;" so he sat down by the bed, and raised his hoarse, weather-beaten voice to the tune of Martyn, as best he could, and mixed up two verses inextricably with a line from "Billy's on the bright blue sea," which he added because he saw he must have something to fill out, and it was all he could think of, — but she thanked him very gently, and said he sang quite well; and said once more that he was to give her love to Jack; and went to sleep afterward; and by and by, they could not wake her to see her boy of twelve brought to her drunk.

The curse of his heredity was upon him. We may blame, we may loathe, we may wonder, we may despair; but we must not forget. There were enough to blame without remembering. Jack, like all drunkards, soon learned this. In fact, he did not remember it very well himself, — not having been acquainted with his father; and never sentimentalized over himself nor whined for his bad luck, but owned, up to his sins, with the bluntness of an honest, bad fellow. He was rather an honest fellow, in spite of it all. He never lied when he was sober.

If the curse of his ancestry had come upon him, its compensatory temperament came too. Jack had the merry heart of the easy drinker.

Born with his father's alcoholized brain-cells, poor baby, endowed with the narcotined conscience which this species of parentage bequeathes, he fell heir to

the kind of attractiveness that goes with the legacy.

He was a happy-go-lucky fellow. Life sat airily on him. He had his mother's handsome eyes dashed with his father's fun (for she could n't take a joke, to save her); he told a good story; he did a kind deed; he was generous with his money, when he had any, and never in the least disturbed when he had n't. He was popular to the dangerous extent that makes one's vices seem a kind of social introduction, and not in Jack's circle alone, be it said. Every crew wanted him. Drunk or sober, as a shipmate he was at par. It was usually easy for him to borrow. The fellows made up his fines for him; there was always somebody to go bail for him when he got before the police-court. Arrested perhaps a half dozen times a year, in his maddest years, he never was sent to the House in his life. There were always people enough who thought it a pity to let such a good fellow go to prison. He had—I was going to say as a matter of course he had—curly hair. One should not omit to notice that he was splendidly tattooed. He was proud, as seamen are, of his brawny arms, dashed from wrist to shoulder with the decorative ingenuity of his class. Jack had æsthetic views of his own, indeed, about his personal allowance of indigo. He had objected to the customary medley of anchors, stars, and crescents, and exhibited a certain reserve of taste, which was rather interesting. On his left arm he bore a very crooked lighthouse rising from a heavy sea; he was, in fact, quite flooded along the bicipital muscle with waves and billows, but nothing else interfered with the massive proportions of the

effect. This was considered a masterly design, and Jack was often called upon to push up his sleeve and explain how he came by the inspiration.

Upon the other arm he wore a crucifix, ten inches long; this was touched with blood-red ink; the dead Christ hung upon it, lean and pitiful. Jack said he took the crucifix against his drowning. It was an uncommonly large and ornate crucifix.

Jack was a steady drinker at nineteen. At twenty-five he was what either an inexperienced or a deeply experienced temperance missionary would have called incurable. The intermediate grades would have confidently expected to save him.

Of course he reformed. He would not have been interesting if he had not. The unmitigated sot has few attractions even for seafaring society. It is the foil and flash, the by-play and side-light of character, that "lead us on." Jack was always reforming. After that night when he was brought home on the bob-sled, the little boy was as steady and as miserable as he knew how to be for a long time; he drew the unfortunate inference that the one involved the other. By the time his mother's grave was green with the scanty Fairharbor church-yard grass,—for even the sea-wind seems to have a grudge against the very dead for choosing dry graves in Fairharbor, and scants them in their natural covering,—by that time rank weeds had overgrown the sorrow of the homeless boy. He and his step-father "got on" less than ever now, as was to be expected; and when one day Jack announced with characteristic candor that he was going to get drunk if he went to Torment for it, the two parted company; and the crumbling

cottage knew Jack no more. By and by, when his step-father was drowned at Georges', Jack borrowed the money for some black gloves and a hat-band. He had the reputation of being a polite fellow ; the fishermen spelled it t-o-n-y. Truth to tell, the old dory-mate had wondered sometimes on Sunday afternoons if he *had* been the man to manage Jack ; and felt that the main object of his marriage had been defeated.

Jack, as I say, was always reforming. Every temperance society in the city had a hand at him. They were of the old-fashioned, easy type which took their responsibilities comfortably. They held him out on a pair of moral tongs, and tried to toast his misdemeanors out of him, before a quick fire of pledges and badges ; and when he tumbled out of the tongs, and asked the president and treasurer why they did n't bow to him in the street when he was drunk, or why, if he was good enough for them in the lodge-room, he was n't good enough to shake hands with before folks on the post-office steps, or propounded any of those ingenious posers with which his kind are in the habit of disturbing the benevolent spirit, they snapped the tongs too, and turned him over to the churches.

These touched him gingerly. They invited him into the free pews, — a dismal little row in the gallery, — sent him a tract or two, and asked him a few well-meant and very confusing religious questions, to which Jack's replies were far from satisfactory. One ardent person, a recent convert, coaxed him into a weekly prayer-meeting. It was a very good, honest, uninteresting prayer-meeting, and there were people



sitting there beside him with clean lives and clear faces whose motives Jack was not worthy to understand, and he knew enough to know it. But it happened to be a foreign mission prayer-meeting, devoted to the Burmese field; which was, therefore, be it said, not so much an argument against foreign missions, as a deficient means of grace to the fisherman. Jack was terribly bored. He ran his hands through his curls, and felt for his tobacco, and whispered to the young convert to know if there weren't any waits in the play so a man could get out without hurting anybody's feelings. But just then the young convert struck up a hymn, and Jack stayed.

He liked the singing. His restless, handsome face took on a change such as a windy day takes on toward dusk, when the breeze dies down. When he found that they were singing "Rock of Ages," he tried to sing it too, — for he was a famous tenor on deck. But when he had sung a line or two, — flash! down in one of the empty pews in front, he saw a thin old lady with blue eyes, sitting in a black alpaca dress, with her hands clasped on her gingham apron.

"That's my mother. Have I got the jim-jams?" asked this unaccustomed worshiper of himself. But then he remembered that he was sober. He could sing no longer after this, but bowed his head and looked into his old felt hat, and wondered if he were going to cry, or get religion. In point of fact, he did neither of these things, because a very old church-member arose just then, and said he saw a poor cast-away in our midst to-night, and he besought the prayers of the meeting for his soul. Jack stopped

crying. He looked hard at the old church member. He knew him; had always known him. The fisherman waited till that prayer was through, — it was rather a long prayer, — and then he too sprang to his feet. He looked all around the decorous place; his face was white with the swift passion of the drinking man.

“I never spoke in meetin’ in my life,” said Jack in an unsteady voice. “I ain’t religious. I drink. But I’m sober to-night, and I’ve got something to say to you. I heard what that man said. I know him. He’s old Jim Crownoby. I’ve always knowed Jim Crownoby. He owns a sight of property in this town. He’s a rich man. He owns that block on Black Street. You know he does. You can’t deny it. Nor he can’t neither. All I want to say is, I’ve got drunk in one of them places of his time and again; and if there ain’t anybody but *him* to pray for my soul, I’d rather go to the devil.”

Jack stopped short, jammed on his hat, and left the meeting. In the shocked rustle that followed, some one had the tact to start “Rescue the perishing,” as the fisherman strode down the broad aisle. He did not go again. The poor young convert followed him up for a week or two, and gave him an expensive Testament, bought out of an almost invisible personal income, in vain.

“I’ve no objections to you,” said Jack candidly; “I’m much obliged to ye for yer politeness, sir. But them churches that sub-leases to a rumseller, I don’t think they onderstand a drinkin’ man. Hey? Well, ain’t he their biggest rooster, now? Don’t he do the heft of the payin’, and the tallest of their crowin’,

consequent? Thought so. Better leave me go, sir. I ain't a pious man; I 'm a fisherman."

"Fishes," said Jack, "is no fools."

He gave voice to this remark one day in Boston, when he was twenty-five years old. He was trying to entertain a Boston girl; she was not familiar with Fairharbor or with the scenery of his calling; he wanted to interest her; he liked the girl. He had liked a good many girls, it need not be said; but this one had laid upon the fisherman — she knew not how, he knew not why, and what man or woman of us could have told him? — the power that comes not of reason, or of time, or of trying, or of wisdom, or of fitness, but of the mystery to which, when we are not speaking of Jack, we give the name of love. It seems a sacrilege, admit, to write it here, and of these two. But there, again, it would be easy to be wrong. The study of the relativity of human feeling is a delicate science; it calls for a fine moral equipment. If this were the high-water mark of nature for Jack — and who shall say? — the tide shall have its sacred due, even down among those weeds and in that mud. He liked that girl, among them all, and her he thought of gently. He had known her a long time; as much as three months. When the vessel came into Boston to sell halibut, he had a few days there, drifting about as seamen do, homeless and reckless; dashing out the wages just paid off, in ways that sometimes he remembered and sometimes he forgot, and that usually left him without a dollar toward his next fine when he should be welcomed by the police court of his native city on returning home.

Jack thought, I say, gravely of this girl. He never once took her name in vain among the fellows; and she had not been a very good girl, either. But Jack reflected that he was not very good himself, if you came to that. His downright, honest nature stood him in stead in this moral distinction; there was always a broad streak of generosity in him at his worst; it goes with the temperament, we say, and perhaps we say it too often to give him half the credit of it.

She was a pretty girl, and she was very young. She had told Jack her story, as they strolled about the bright Boston streets on comfortable winter evenings; when he took her to the variety show, or to the oyster-shop, and they talked together. Jack pitied her. Perhaps she deserved it; it was a sad little story — and she was so very young! She had a gentle way with Jack; for some reason, God knows why, she had trusted him from the first, and he had never once been known to disturb her trust. That was the pleasant part of it.

On this evening that we speak of, Jack was sober. He was often sober when he had an evening to spend with the Boston girl; not always — no; truth must be told. She looked as pretty as was in her, that night; she had black eyes and a kind of yellow hair that Jack had never seen crinkled low on the forehead above black eyes before; he thought her as fine to look at as any actress he ever saw; for the stage was Jack's standard of the magnificent, as it is to so many of his sort. The girl's name was Teen. Probably she had been called Christine once, in her country home; she even told Jack that she had been baptized.

"I was n't, myself," said Jack; "I roared so, they darsen't do it. My mother got me to church, for she was a pious woman, and I pummeled the parson in the face with both fists, and she said she come away, for she was ashamed of me. She always said that christenin' was n't never legal. It disappointed her, too. I was an awful baby."

"I should think likely," said Teen with candor. "Do you set much by your mother?"

"She's dead," said Jack in a subdued voice. Teen looked at him; she had never heard him speak like that.

"I 'most wished mine was," said the girl; "she'd 'a' ben better off — along of me."

"That's so," said Jack.

The two took a turn in silence up and down the brightly lighted street; their thoughts looked out strangely from their marred young faces; they felt as if they were in a foreign country. Jack had meant to ask her to take a drink, but he gave it up; he could n't, somehow.

"Was you always a fisherman?" asked Teen, feeling, with a woman's tact, that somebody must change the current of the subject.

"I was a fisherman three generations back," Jack answered her; "borned a fisherman, you bet! I could n't 'a' ben nothin' else if I'd drowndéd for it. It's a smart business. You hev to keep your wits about you. Fishes is no fools."

"Ain't they?" asked the girl listlessly. She was conscious of failing in conversational brilliancy; but the truth was, she could n't get over what they had been saying: it was always unfortunate when

she remembered her mother. Jack began to talk to her about his business again, but Teen did not reply; and when he looked down at her to see what ailed her, there were real tears rolling over her pretty cheeks.

“Why, Teen!” said Jack.

“Leave go of me, Jack!” said Teen, “and let me get off; I ain’t good company to-night. I’ve got the dumps. I can’t entertain ye, Jack. And, Jack — don’t let’s talk about mothers next time, will we? It spoils the evenin’. Leave go of me, and I’ll go home by my own self. I’d rather.”

“I won’t leave go of you!” cried Jack, with a sudden blazing purpose lighting up all the corners of his soul. It was a white light, not unholy; it seemed to shine through and through him with a soft glow like a candle on an altar. “I’ll never leave go of you, Teen, if you’ll say so. I’d rather marry you.”

“Marry *me*?” said Teen.

“Yes, marry you. I’d a sight rather. There, now! It’s out with it. What do you say to that, Teen?”

With one slow finger-tip Teen wiped away the tears that fell for her mother. A ring on her finger glistened in the light as she did this. She saw the sparkle, tore off the ring and dashed it away; it fell into the mud, and was trodden out of sight instantly. Jack sprang gallantly to pick it up.

“Don’t you touch it!” cried the girl. She put her bared hand back upon his arm. The ring had left a little mark upon her finger; she glanced at this, and looked up into Jack’s handsome face; he looked very kind.



"Jack, dear," said Teen softly, "I ain't fit to marry ye."

"You're fitter 'n I be," answered Jack manfully.

Teen sighed; she did not speak at once; other tears came now, but these were tears for herself and for Jack. Jack felt this, after his fashion; they gave him singular confusion of mind.

"I would n't cry about it, Teen. You need n't have me if you don't want to."

"But I *do* want to, Jack."

"Honest?"

"Honest it is, Jack."

"Will ye make a good wife, Teen?" asked Jack, after some unprecedented thought.

"I'll try, Jack."

"You'll never go back on me, nohow?"

"I ain't that sort!" cried the girl, drawing herself up a little. A new dignity sat upon her with a certain grace which was beautiful to see.

"Will you swear it, Teen?"

"If you'd rather, Jack."

"What'll you swear by, now?" asked Jack.  
"You must swear by all you hold holy."

"What *do* I hold holy?" mused Teen.

"Will you swear," continued Jack seriously, "will you swear to me by the Rock of Ages?"

"What's that?" asked the girl.

"It's a hymn-tune. I want you to swear me by the Rock of Ages that you'll be that you say you will to me. Will you do it, Teen?"

"Oh, yes," said Teen, "I'll do it. Where shall we come across one?"

"I guess I can find it," Jack replied. "I can find 'most anything I set out to."

So they started out at random, in their reckless fashion, in the great city, to find the Rock of Ages for the asking.

Jack led his companion hither and yon, peering into churches and vestries and missions, and wherever he saw signs of sacred things. Singing they heard abundantly in the gay town; songs merry, mad, and sad, but not the song for a girl to swear by that she would be true wife to a man who trusted her.

Wandering thus, on the strange errand whose pathos was so far above their own dream or knowledge, they chanced at last upon the place and the little group of people known in that part of Boston as Mother Mary's meeting.

The girl said she had been there once, but that Mother Mary was too good for her; she was one of the real kind. Everybody knew Mother Mary and her husband; he was a parson. They were poor folks themselves, Teen said, and understood poor folks, and did for them all the year round, not clearing out, like rich ones, when it came hot weather, but stood by 'em, Teen said. They kept the little room open, and if you wanted a prayer you went in and got it, just as you'd call for a drink or a supper; it was always on hand for you, and a kind word sure to come with it, and you always knew where to go for 'em; and Mother Mary treated you like folks. She liked her, Teen said. If she'd been a different girl, she'd have gone there of a cold night all winter. But Teen said she felt ashamed.

"I guess she'll have what I'm after," said Jack. "She sounds like she would. Let's go in and see."

So they went into the quiet place among the praying people, and stood staring, for they felt embarrassed. Mother Mary looked very white and peaceful; she was a tall, fair woman; she wore a black dress with white about the bosom; it was a plain, old dress, much mended. Mother Mary did not look rich, as Teen had said. The room was filled with poor creatures gathered about her like her children, while she talked with them and taught them as she could. She crossed the room immediately to where the young man stood, with the girl beside him.

"We've come," said Jack, "to find the Rock of Ages." He drew Teen's hand through his arm, and held it for a moment; then, moved by some fine instinct mysterious to himself, he lifted and laid it in Mother Mary's own.

"Explain it to her, ma'am," he said; "tell her, won't you? I'm going to marry her, if she'll have me. I want her to swear by somethin' holy she'll be a true wife to me. She had n't anything particularly holy herself, and the holiest thing I know of is the Rock of Ages. I've heard my mother sing it. She's dead. We've been huntin' Boston over to-night after the Rock of Ages."

Mother Mary was used to the pathos of her sober work, but the tears sprang now to her large and gentle eyes. She did not speak to Jack, — could not possibly, just then; but, delaying only for the moment till she could command herself, she flung her rich, maternal voice out upon the words of the old hymn. Her husband joined her, and all the people present swelled the chorus.

“Rock of Ages, cleft for me !  
Let me hide myself in thee ;  
.  
.  
.  
.  
.  
Be of sin the perfect cure,  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.”

They sang it all through, — the three verses that everybody knows, — and Jack and Teen stood listening. Jack tried to sing himself; but Teen hid her face, and cried upon his arm.

“*Thou must save,*” sang the praying people ;  
“*Thou must save, and thou alone !*”

The strain died solemnly ; the room was quiet ; the minister yonder began to pray, and all the people bowed their heads. But Mother Mary stood quite still, with the girl’s hand trembling in her own.

“Swear it, Teen !” Jack bent down his curly head and whispered ; he would not shame his promised wife before these people. “Swear by *that* you ’ll be true wife to me !”

“I swear it, Jack,” sobbed Teen. “If *that’s* the Rock of Ages, I swear by it, though I was to die for it, I ’ll be an honest wife to you.”

“Come back when you’ve got your license,” said Mother Mary, smiling through her tears, “and my husband will marry you if you want him to.”

“We ’ll come to-morrow,” Jack answered gravely.

“Jack,” said Teen in her pretty way, — for she had a very pretty way, — “if I ’m an honest wife to you, will you be *kind* to me ?” She did not ask him to swear it by the Rock of Ages. She took his word for it, poor thing ! Women do.

## III.

Mother Mary's husband married them next day at the Mission meeting; and Mother Mary sat down at the melodeon in the corner of the pleasant place, and played and sang Toplady's great hymn for them, as Jack had asked her. It was his wedding march. He was very sober and gentle, — almost like a better man. Teen thought him the handsomest man she had ever seen.

"Oh, I say, Teen," he nodded to her, as they walked away, "one thing I forgot to tell you, — I'm reformed."

"Are you, Jack?"

"If I ever drink a drop again, so help me" — But he stopped.

"So help you, Rock of Ages?" asked the new-made wife. But Jack winced; he was honest enough to hesitate at this.

"I don't know's I'd darst — *that*," he added ruefully. "But I'm reformed. I have lost all hanker for liquor. I shall never drink again. You'll see, Teen."

Teen did see, as was to be expected. She saw a great deal, poor thing! Jack did not drink — for a long time; it was nearly five months, for they kept close count. He took her to Fairharbor, and rented the old half of the crumbling cottage where his mother used to sit and watch for him on long, late evenings. The young wife did the watching now. They planted some cinnamon rose-bushes by the doorsteps of the cottage, and fostered them affection-

ately. Jack was as happy and sober as possible, to begin with. He picked the cinnamon roses and brought them in for his wife to wear. He was proud to have a home of his own; he had not expected to; in fact, he had never had one since that night when his mother said they were to give her love to him, if he came home while she was asleep. He had beaten about, sleeping for the most part in his berth, and sailing again directly; he had never had any place, he said, to hang his winter clothes in; closets and bureaus seemed treasure-houses to him, and the kitchen fire a luxury greater than a less good-looking man would have deserved. When he came home, drenched and chilly, from a winter voyage, and Teen took the covers off, and the fiery heart of the coals leaped out to greet him, and she stood in the rich color, with her yellow hair, young and fair and sweet as any man's wife could look, and said she had missed him, and called him her dear husband, Jack even went so far as to feel that Teen was the luxury. He treated her accordingly; that was at first. He came straight home to her; he kept her in flour and fuel; she had the little things and the gentle words that women need. Teen was very fond of him. This was the first of it, — I was going to say this was the worst of it. All there was of Teen seemed to have gone into her love for Jack. A part of Jack had gone into his love for Teen. Teen was very happy, to begin with. The respectable neighbors came to see her, and said, "We're happy to make your acquaintance." Nobody knew that it had not always been so that Teen's acquaintance would have been a source of



social happiness. And she wrote to her mother that she was married; and her mother came on to make her a little visit; and Teen cried her soul out for joy. She was very modest and home-keeping and loving; no wife in the land was truer than this girl he had chosen was to the fisherman who chose her. Jack knew that. He believed in her. She made him happy; and therefore she kept him right.

All this was at first. It did not last. Why should we expect that, when we see how little there is in the relation of man and woman which lasts? If happy birth and gentle rearing, and the forces of what we call education, and the silken webs of spun refinements, are so strained in the tie which requires two who cannot get away from each other to make each other happy, how should we ask, of the law of chances, the miracle for Teen and Jack?

There was no miracle. No transubstantiation of the common bread to holy flesh was wrought upon that poor altar. Their lot went the way of other lots, with the facts of their history dead against them. Trouble came, and poverty, and children, and care, and distaste. Jack took to his old ways, and his wife to the tears that they bring. The children died; they were poor sickly babies, who wailed a little while in her arms, and slipped out because there was n't enough to them to stay. And the gray house was damp. Some said it was diphtheria; but their mother said it was the will of God. She added: Might his will be done! On the whole she was not sorry. Their father struck her when he was in liquor. She thought if the babies lived they might get hurt. A month before the last one was

born she showed to Jack's biographer a bruise across her shoulder, long and livid. She buttoned her dress over it with hasty repentance.

"Maybe I'd ought n't to have told," she said. "But he said he'd be *kind* to me."

Jack was very sorry about this when he was sober. He kissed his wife, and bought a pair of pink kid shoes for the baby, which it never grew large enough to wear.

I am not writing a temperance story, only the biography of a fisherman, and a few words will say better than many how it was. Alcoholized brain-cells being one of the few bequests left to society which the heirs do not dispute, Jack went back to his habits with the ferocity that follows abstinence. Hard luck came. Teen was never much of a house-keeper; she had left her mother too early; had never been taught. Things were soggy, and not always clean; and she was so busy in being struck and scolded, and in bearing and burying babies, that it grew comfortless beside the kitchen fire. The last of the illusions which had taken the name of home within the walls of the crumbling half-cottage withered out of it, just as the cinnamon roses did the summer Jack watered them with whiskey by a little emotional mistake.

A worse thing had happened, too. Some shipmate had "told" in the course of time; and Teen's pre-matrimonial story got set adrift upon the current—one of the cruelest currents of its kind—of Fair-harbor gossip. The respectable neighbors made her feel it, as only respectable neighbors do such things. Jack, raging, overheard her name upon the wharves.

Teen had been "that she said she would" to him. He knew it. No matron in the town had kept her life or heart more true. In all her sickness and trouble and slackness, and in going cold or hungry, and in her vivid beauty that none of all these things could quench, Teen had carried a sweet dignity of her own as the racer in the old Promethean festival carried the torch while he ran against the wind. Jack knew, — oh yes, he knew. But he grew sullen, suspicious. When he was drunk he was always jealous ; it began to take that form. When he was sober he still admired his wife ; sometimes he went so far as to remember that he loved her. When this happened, Teen dried her eyes, and brushed her yellow hair, and washed up the kitchen floor, and made the coffee, and said to the grocer when she paid for the sugar, "My husband has reformed."

One night Jack came home unexpectedly ; a strange mood sat upon him, which his wife did not find herself able to classify by any of the instant and exquisite perceptions which grow, like new faculties, in wives. He had been drinking heavily when he left her, and she had not looked for him for days ; if he sailed as he was, it would be a matter of weeks. Teen went straight to him ; she thought he might be hurt ; she held out her arms as she would to one of her children ; but he met her with a gesture of indifference, and she shrank back.

"She's here," said Jack. "Mother Mary's in this d—— town. I see her."

"I wish she'd talk to you," said Teen, saying precisely the wrong thing by the fatal instinct which so often possesses drunkards' wives.

“You do, do you?” quoth Jack. “Well, I don’t. I have n’t give her the chance.” He crushed on his hat and stole out of the house again.

But his mood was on him yet; the difference being that his wife was out of it. He sulked and skulked about the streets alone for a while; he did not go back to the boys just then, but wandered with the apparent aimlessness in which the most tenacious aims are hidden. Mother Mary and her husband were holding sailors’ meetings in the roughest quarter of the town. There was need enough of Mother Mary in Fairharbor. A crowd had gathered to hear the novelty. Fairharbor seamen were none too used to being objects of consideration; it was a matter of mark that a parson and a lady should hire a room from a rich fish-firm, pay for it out of their own scanty pockets, and invite one in from deck or wharf, in one’s oil-clothes or jumper, to hear what a mess-mate of Jack’s called a “high-toned prayer.” He meant perhaps to convey the idea that the petition treated the audience politely.

Jack followed the crowd in the dark, shrinking in its wake, for he was now sober enough not to feel like himself. He waited till the last of the fellows he knew had gone into the place, and then crept up on tiptoe, and put his face against the window of the salt-cod warehouse where the little congregation was gathered, and looked in. The room was full and bright. It wore that same look of peace and shelter which he remembered. Mother Mary stood, as she had stood before, tall and pale in her black dress, with the white covering on her bosom. Her husband had been speaking to the fishermen, and she, as Jack

put his gnarled hand to his excited eyes and his eyes to the window-glass, turned her face full about, to start the singing. She seemed to Jack to look at him. Her look was sad. He felt ashamed, and cowered down below the window-sill. But he wanted to hear her sing, — he had never heard anybody sing like Mother Mary, — and so he stayed there for a little while, curled against the fish-house. It began to rain, and he was pretty wet; but Jack was in his jumper, and a ragged old jumper at that; he knew he was not so handsome as he used to be; he felt that he cut a poor figure even for a drunken fisherman; all the self-respect that life had left him shrank from letting Mother Mary see him. Jack would not go in. A confused notion came to him, as he crouched against the warehouse, in the showers, that it was just as well it should rain on him; it might wash him. He pushed up his sleeves and let the rain fall on his arms. He found an old Cape Ann turkey box there was lying about, turned it edgewise so that one ragged knee might rest upon it, and thus bring his eye to a level with the window-sill, while yet he could not be seen from within. So he crouched listening. The glimmer from the prayer-room came across the fisherman's bared right arm, and struck the crucifix. Jack had the unconscious attitude of one sinking, who had thrown up his arms to be saved. The Christ on the crucifix looked starved and sickly. Jack did not notice the crucifix.

At this moment Mother Mary's yearning voice rang out above the hoarse chorus of the fishermen, whose weather-ragged and reverent faces lifted themselves

mistily before her, as if they had been the countenance of one helpless man : —

“ Rock of Ages, cleft for me ! ”

“ Oh, my God ! ” cried Jack.

#### IV.

It was the next day that some one told Mother Mary, at the poor boarding-house where she stayed, that a woman wanted a few words with her. The visitor was Teen. She was worn and wan and sobbing with excitement. Her baby was soon to be born. She did not look as if she had enough to eat. She had come, she said, just to see Mother Mary, just to tell her, for Jack never would tell himself, but she was sure her husband had reformed ; he would never drink again ; he meant to be a sober man ; and Mother Mary ought to know she did it, for she did, God bless her !

“ I ’ve walked all this way to bless you for myself,” said Teen. “ I ain’t very fit for walkin’, nor I can’t afford a ferry-ticket, for he did n’t leave me nothin’ on this trip, but I ’ve come to bless you. My husband come to your meetin’, Mother Mary, by himself, Jack did. He never goes to no meetin’s, — nobody could n’t drove him ; but he come to yours because he says you treat a man like folks, and he would n’t go inside, for he ’d ben drinkin’ and he felt ashamed. So he set outside, up on a box behind the winder and he peeked in. And he said it rained on him while he set peekin’, for he wanted to get a look at you. And he come home and told me, for we ’d had some



words beforehand, and I was glad to see him. I was settin' there and cryin' when he come. 'I would n't, Teen,' says he, 'for I've seen Mother Mary, and I'm reformed,' says he. So he told me how he set up on the box and peeked. He says you looked straight at him. He says you stood up very tall and kind of white. He says you read something out of a book, and then you sang to him. He says the song you sang was Rock of Ages, and it made him feel so bad I had to cry to see him. He come in, and he got down on the lounge against our window, and he put his hand acrost his eyes and groaned like he was hurted in an accident. And he says, 'Teen, I wish 't I was a better man.' And I says, 'Jack, I wish 't you was.' And he says, 'I lost the hanker when I heard her sing the Rock of Ages, and if I lost the hanker I could swear off.' So I did n't answer him, for if I says, 'Do swear off,' he'd just swear on, — they won't, you know, for wives. But I made him a cup of coffee, for I did n't know what else to do, and I brought it to him on the lounge, and he thanked me. 'Teen,' he says, 'I'll never drink a drop again, so help me Mother Mary!' And then he kissed me, — for they don't, you know, after you've been married. And he's gone out haddockin', but we parted very kind. And so I come to tell you, for it may n't be many days that I could walk it, and I've ben that to him as I said I should, and I thought you'd better know."

"You've had no breakfast," answered Mother Mary, "and you've walked too far. Here, stop at the Holly Tree as you go home; get a bowl of soup; and take the ferry back. There, there! don't cry

quite so hard. I'll try to stay a little longer. I won't leave town till Jack comes in. It *takes* the Rock of Ages to cure the hanker, Teen. But I've seen older men than he is stop as if they had been stopped by a lasso thrown from heaven. If there's any save in him," added Mother Mary below her breath, "he shall have his chance, this time."

He went aboard sober, and sober he stayed. He kept a good deal by himself and thought of many things. His face paled out and refined, as their faces do, from abstinence; the ghost of his good looks hovered about him; he mended up his clothes; he did a kind turn to a messmate now and then; he told some excellent clean stories, and raised the spirits of the crew; he lent a dollar to a fellow with the rheumatism who had an indebtedness to liquidate for St. Galen's Oil. When he had done this, he remembered that he had left his wife without money, and said aloud: "That's a d—— mean trick to play on a woman."

He had bad luck, however, that trip; his share was small; he made seven dollars and twenty-seven cents in three weeks. This was conceded by the crew of the fishing-schooner (her name was the *Destiny*) to be because Jack had "sworn off." It is a superstition among them. One unfamiliar with the lives of these men will hammer cold iron if he thinks to persuade them that rum and luck do not go together; or that to "reform" does not imply a reduction of personal income. You might as well try to put the fisherman's fist into a Honiton lace jumper, as the fisherman's mind into proportion upon this point.

Therefore Jack took his poor trip carelessly; it was to be expected; he would explain it to Mother Mary when he got in. He drank nothing at all; and they weighed for home.

When Jack stepped off the *Destiny*, at Zephaniah Salt & Co.'s wharf at Fairharbor, after that voyage, clean, pale, good-natured, and sober, thinking that he would get shaved before he hurried home to Teen, and wishing he could pay the grocer's bill upon the way, and thinking that, in default of this, he would start an account at the market, and carry her a chop or a sausage, in fact, thinking about her with an absorption which resembled consideration, if not affection,—suddenly he caught her name upon the wharves.

It may have been said of accident, or of the devil,—God knew; they may have been too drunk to notice Jack at first, or they may have seen and scented from afar the bad blood they stirred, like the hounds they were. It will never be told. The scandal of such places is incredibly barbarous, but it is less than the barbarity of drinking men to a man who strikes out from among themselves, and fights for his respectability.

The words were few,—they are not for us,—but they were enough to do the deed. Jack was quite sober. He understood. They assailed the honor of his home, the truth of his wife; they hurled her past at her and at himself; they derided the trust which he had in her in his absence; they sneered at the “reformed man” whose domestic prospects were—as they were; they exulted over him with the exultation in the sight of the havoc wrought, which is the most inexplicable impulse of evil.

Everybody knew how hot-blooded Jack was ; and when the fury rushed red over his face painted gray by abstinence, there was a smart scattering upon the wharves.

His hand clapped to his pockets ; but his was an old, cheap, rusty pistol (he had swapped a Bible and his trawls for it once, upon a spree, and got cheated) ; it held but one cartridge, and his wrist shook. The shot went sputtering into the water, and no harm came of it. Jack jammed the pistol back into his pocket ; he glared about him madly, but had his glare for his pains ; the men were afraid of him ; he was alone upon the wharf.

It can hardly be said that he hesitated. Would that it could. Raving to himself,—head down, hands clenched, feet stumbling like a blind man's,—the fisherman sank into the first open door he staggered by, as a seiner, pierced by an invisible sword-fish, sinks into the sea. He had fifteen such places to pass before he reached his house. His chances were — as such chances go — at best.

He drank for half an hour — an hour — a half more — came out, and went straight home.

It was now night of a February day. It had not been a very cold day ; a light, clean snow had fallen, which was thawing gently. Jack, looking dimly on through his craze, saw the light of his half of the gray cottage shining ahead ; he perceived that the frost was melted from the windows. The warm color came quietly down to greet him across the fresh snow ; it had to him in his delirium the look of a woman's eyes when they are true, and lean out of her love to greet a man. He did not put this to himself in these words, but only said : —

"Them lamps look like she used to, — curse her!" and so went hurtling on.

He dashed up against the house, as a bowsprit dashes on the rocks, took one mad look through the unfrosted window, below the half-drawn curtain, and flung himself against the door, and in.

His wife sat there in the great rocking-chair, leaning back; she had a pillow behind her, and her feet on the salt-fish box which he had covered once to make a cricket for her, when they were first married. She looked pale and pretty — very pretty. She was talking to a visitor who sat upon the lounge beside her. It was a man. Now, Jack knew this man well; it was an old messmate; he had sworn off, a year ago, and they had gone different ways; he used to be a rough fellow; but people said now you would n't know him.

"I ain't so drunk but I see who you be, Jim," began the husband darkly; "I'll settle with *you* another day. I've got that to say to my wife I'd say better if we missed your company. Leave us by ourselves!"

"Look here, Jack," Jim flashed good-humoredly, "you're drunk, you know. She'll tell you what I come for. You ask her. Seein' she was n't right smart, — and there's them as says she lacked for victuals, — my wife sent me over with a bowl of cranberry sass, so help me Heaven!"

"I'll kill *you* some other evenin'. Leave us be!" cried Jack.

"We was settin' and talkin' about the Reform Club when you come in," objected Jim, with the patience of an old friend. "We was wonderin'

if we could n't get you to sign, Jack. Ask her if we was n't. Come, now! I wouldn't make a fool of myself if I was you, Jack. See there. You've set her to cryin' already. And she ain't right smart."

"Clear out of my house!"<sup>1</sup> thundered Jack. "Leave us be by ourselves!"

"I don't know 's I'd oughter," hesitated Jim.

"Leave us be! or I won't leave you be a d—— minute longer! Ain't it my house? Get out of it!"

"It is, that's a fact," admitted the visitor, looking perplexed; "but I declare to Jupiter I don't know 's I'd oughter leave it, the way things look. Have your senses, Jack, my boy! *Have* your senses! She ain't right smart."

But with this Jack sprang upon him, and the wife cried out between them, for the love of mercy, that murder would be done.

"Leave us be!" she pleaded, sobbing. "Nothin' else won't pacify him. Go, Jim, go, and shut the door, and thank her, for the cranberry sarse was very kind of her, and for my husband's sake don't tell nobody he was n't kind to me. There. That's right. There."

She sank back into the rocking-chair, for she was feeble still, and looked gently up into her husband's face. All the tones of her agitated voice had changed.

She spoke very low and calmly, as if she gathered her breath for the first stage of a struggle whose nature she solemnly understood. She had grown exceedingly pale.

<sup>1</sup> Such peculiarities of Jack's pronunciation as were attributable to his condition will not be reproduced here.



"Jack, dear?" softly.

"I'll give ye time," he answered with an ominous quiet. "Tell yer story first. Out with it!"

"I have n't got nothin' to tell, Jack. He brought the cranberry sarse, for his wife took care of me, and she was very kind. And he set a little, and we was talkin' about the club, just as he says we was. It's Mother Mary's club, Jack. She's made Jim secretary, and she wanted you to join, for I told her you'd reformed. Oh, Jack, I told her you'd reformed!—Jack, Jack! Oh, Jack! What are you goin' to do to me! What makes you look like that?—Jack, Jack, *Jack!*"

"Stand up here!" he raved. He was past reason, and she saw it; he tore off his coat and pushed up his sleeves from his tattooed arms.

"You've played me false, I say! I trusted ye, and you've tricked me. I'll teach ye to be the talk upon the wharves another time when I get in from Georges'!"

She stood as he bade her, tottered and sank back; crawled up again, holding by the wooden arm of the rocking-chair, and stretched one hand out to him, feebly. She did not dare to touch him; if she had clung to him, he would have throttled her. When she saw him rolling up his sleeves, her heart stood still. But Teen thought: "I will not show him I'm afraid of him. It's the only chance I've got."

The poor girl looked up once into his face, and thought she smiled.

"Jack? *Dear Jack!*"

"I'll teach ye! I'll teach ye!"

"Oh, wait a moment, Jack. For the love of

Heaven, — stop a minute! I've been that I said I'd be to you, since we was married. I've been an honest wife to you, my boy, and there's none on earth nor heaven as can look me in the eye and dars't to say I have n't. I swore to you upon the Rock of Ages, Mother Mary witnessin', — why, Jack!" her voice sank to infinite sweetness, "have you forgotten? You ain't yourself, poor boy. You'll be so sorry. I ain't very strong, yet, — you'd feel bad if you should hit me — again. I'd hate to have you feel so bad. Jack, dear, don't. Go look in the other room, before you strike again. Ye ain't seen it yet. Jack, for the love of mercy! — Jack! Jack!"

"Say you've played me false, and I'll stop. Own up, and I'll quit. Own up to me, I say!"

"I can't own up to you, for I swore you by the Rock of Ages; I swore you I would be an honest wife. You may pummel me to death, but I'll not lie away them words I swore to you . . . by that, . . . Jack, for the love of Heaven, don't you, Jack! For the way you used to feel to me, dear, dear Jack! For the sake of the babies we had, . . . and you walked beside of me, to bury 'em! Oh, for God's sake . . . *Jack!* . . . Oh, you said you'd be *kind* to me . . . Oh, you'll be so sorry! For the love of pity! For the love of God! Not the *pistol!* Oh, for the Rock of" —

But there he struck her down. The butt end of the weapon was heavy enough to do the deed. He struck, and then flung it away.

Upon his bared arm, as it came crashing, the crucifix was spattered red.

## V.

He stood up stupidly and looked about the room. The covers were off the kitchen stove, and the heart of the coals blazed out. Her yellow hair had loosened as she fell, and shone upon the floor.

He remembered that she spoke about the other room, and said of something yonder, that he had n't seen it yet. Confusedly he wondered what it was. He stumbled in and stared about the bedroom. It was not very light there, and it was some moments before he perceived the cradle, standing straight across his way. The child waked as he hit the cradle, and began to cry, stretching out its hands.

He had forgotten all about the baby. There had been so many.

"You'd better get up, Teen," he said as he went out; "it's cryin' after you."

He shut the door and staggered down the steps. He hesitated once, and thought he would go back and say to her:—

"What's the use of layin' there?"

But he thought better, or worse, of it, and went his way. He went out and reshipped at once, lingering only long enough to drink madly on the way, at a place he knew, where he was sure to be let alone. The men were afraid of Jack, when he was so far gone under as this. Nobody spoke to him. He went down to Salt Brothers' wharf, opposite Salt & Co.'s, and found the Daredevil, just about to weigh. She was short by one hand, and took him as he was.

He was surprised to find himself aboard when the next sun went down; he had turned in his bunk and was overheard to call for Teen, ordering her to do some service for him, testily enough.

"Oh," he muttered, "she ain't here, is she? Be blasted if I ain't on the Daredevil."

He was good for nothing, for a matter of days, and silent or sullen for the trip. It had been a heavy spree. He fell to, when he came to himself, and fished desperately; his luck turned, and he made money; he made seventy-five dollars. They were gone three weeks. They had a bitter voyage, for it was March.

They struck a gale at Georges', and another coming home. It snowed a great deal, and the rigging froze. The crew were uncommonly cold. They kept the steward cooking briskly, and four or five hot meals a day were not enough to keep one's courage up. They were particular about their cooking, as fishermen are, and the steward of the Daredevil was famous in his calling. But it was conceded to be unusually cold, even for March, at Georges'. One must keep the blood racing, somehow, for life's sake.

Whiskey flowed fast between meals. Jack was observed not to limit himself. "It was for luck," he said. Take it through, it was a hard trip. The sober men — there were some — looked grim and pinched; the drinkers, ugly.

"It's a hound's life," said a dory-mate of Jack's one day. His name was Rowe — Rowe Salt; he was a half-brother of Jim's. But Jim was at home. And Teen, of course, was at home. Jack had not spoken

of her; he had thought of her, — he had thought of nothing else. God knows what those thoughts had been. When Rowe spoke to him in this fashion, Jack looked hard at him.

"I 've ben thinkin' ef it disobligated a feller," he said.

"Hey?" asked Rowe.

"If you was treated like folks; but you ain't. You're froze. You're soaked. You're wrecked. Your nets is stole. You're drove off in the fog. You're drowneded, and you lose your trawls. If you swear off, you miss your luck. It's dirty aboard. Folks don't like the looks of you. There's alwers a hanker in the pit o' your stomick. When you get upon a tear you don't know what you — do to — folks."

Jack stopped himself abruptly, and leaned upon his oar; they were trawling, and the weather grew thick.

"Rowe," he said, staring off into the fog, "did ye ever think we was like fishes, us fishin' folks?"

"I don't know's I hev," said the dory-mate, staring too.

"Well, we be, I think. We live in it and we're drowneded in it, and we can't get out on't — we can't *get* out. We look like 'em, too. I've thought about that. Some of us look like haddock. You've got the halibut look, yourself. Skipper, he's got the jib of a monk-fish, — you ken see it for yourself. There's a man I messed with, once, reminded me of a sculpin. I guess I'd pass for a lobster, myself, — for color, anyhow. We take it out someways, each on us. Don't ye know the look the women

folks have when they get old and have gone hungry? You can tell by the build of a boy which way he'll turn out,—halibut way, or hake, or mebbe mackerel if he's sleek and little. It's a kind of a birth-mark, I should n't wonder. There's no gettin' out on't, no more'n it out of you. Sometimes I used to think—

“Good Lord!” cried Jack. He laid down his oar again, and the dory wheeled to starboard sharply.

“Rowe Salt, you look there! You tell me if you see a woman yonder, on the water!”

“You've got the jim-jams, Jack. Women folks don't walk at Georges'. I can't see nothin' nowhere, but it's thick as”—

“It's thick as hell,” interrupted Jack, “and there's a woman walkin' on the water,—Lord! don't you see her? Lord! her hair is yeller hair, and it's streamin' over her,—don't *you* see her? She's walkin' on this devilish fog to-wards the dory,—Teen? Teen! There! Lord save me, Rowe, if I did n't see my wife come walkin' to-wards us, us settin' in this dory! Hi-i-igh! I'll swear off when I get home. I'll tell her so. I hate to see such things.”

“You see, Rowe,” Jack added presently,—for he had not spoken after that, but had fallen grimly to work; it was ten below, and the wind was taking the backward spring for a bitter blow; both men, tugging at their trawls through the high and icy sea, were suffering too much to talk,—“ye see we had some words before I come aboard, and she war n't right smart. The baby can't be very old. I don' know how old it is. I was uncommon drunk;



I don't remember what I did to her. I'm afraid I hit her, — for I had some words with her. I wish 't I was at home. She won't tell nobody. She never does. But I'm set to be at home and tell her I've sworn off. I've got money for her this trip, too; I'm afraid she's in a hurry for it."

After this outburst of confidence, Jack seemed to cling to his dory-mate; he followed him about deck, and looked wistfully at him. Jack had begun to take on the haggard look of the abstainer once again. The crew thought he did not seem like himself. He had stopped drinking, abruptly, after that day in the fog, and suffered heavily from the weather and from exposure.

"I say, Rowe," he asked one day, "if anything was to happen, would you jest step in and tell my wife I did n't believe that yarn about her? She'll know."

Now it befell, that when they were rounding Eastern Point, and not till then, they bespoke the *Destiny*, which was outward bound, and signaled them. She drew to speaking distance, and her skipper had a word with the master of the *Daredevil*, but he spoke none too loud, and made his errand quickly, and veered to his own course, and the two boats parted company, and the *Daredevil* came bustling in. They were almost home.

It was remembered afterward that Jack was badly frostbitten upon that voyage; he looked badly; he had strange ways; the men did not know exactly how to take him. He was overheard to say: —

"*I ain't a-goin' to go to Georges' again.*"

Rowe Salt overheard this, after the skipper of

the *Destiny* had signaled and tacked. Jack was sitting aft alone, when he said it, looking seaward. He had paid little or no attention to the incident of the *Destiny*, but sat staring, plunged in some mood of his own which seemed as solitary, as removed from his kind and from their comprehension, as the moods of mental disorder are from the sane.

So then, with such dexterity as the ignorant man could muster, Salt got his friend down below, on some pretext, and stood looking at him helplessly.

"You don't look well, Rowe," Jack suggested pleasantly.

"Jack," said his dory-mate, turning white enough, "I'll make no bones of it, nor mince nothin', for somebody's got to tell ye, and they said it must be me. There's a warrant after ye. The sheriff's on the tug betwixt us and the wharf. She's layin' off the island, him aboard of her."

"I never was in prison," faltered Jack. "The boys have always bailed me."

"'T ain't a bailin' matter, Jack, this time."

"What did you say?"

"I said it was n't a bailin' business. Somebody's got to tell you."

Jack gazed confidingly up into his friend's face.

"What was it that I done, old boy? Can't ye tell me?"

"Let the sheriff tell you. Ask the sheriff. I'd rather it was the sheriff told you, Jack."

"Tell me what it is I done, Rowe Salt; I'd tell *you*."

He looked puzzled.

"The sheriff knows more about it nor I do,"

begged the fisherman; "don't make an old messmate tell you."

"All right," said Jack, turning away. He had now grown very quiet. He pleaded no more, only to mutter once:—

"I'd rather heard it from a messmate."

Rowe Salt took a step or two, turned, stopped, stirred, and turned again.

"You killed somebody, then, if you will know."

"*Killed* somebody?"

"Yes."

"I was drunk and killed somebody?"

"Lord help you, yes."

"I hope,"—hoarsely—"look here, Salt,—*I hope Teen won't know.*

"I say, Rowe," after a long pause, "who was it that I killed?"

"Ask the sheriff."

"Who was it that I killed?"

"The skipper'll tell you, mebbly. I won't. No, I vow I won't. Let me go. I've done my share of this. Let me up on deck! I want the air!"

"I won't let you up on deck—so help me!—till you tell!"

"Let me off, Jack, let me off!"

"*Tell me who it was, I say!*"

"Lord in heaven, the poor devil don't *know*,—he really don't."

"I thought you would ha' told me, Rowe," said Jack with a smile,—his old winning smile, that had captivated his messmates all his life.

"I *will* tell you!" cried Rowe Salt with an oath of agony. "You killed your wife! You murdered her. She's dead. Teen ain't to home. She's dead."

## VI.

They made way for him at this side and at that, for he sprang up the gangway, and dashed among them. When he saw them all together, and how they looked at him, he stopped. A change seemed to strike his purpose, be it what it might.

"Boys," said Jack, looking all about, "ye won't have to go no bail for me. I'll bide my account, this time."

He parted from them, for they let him do the thing he would, and got himself alone into the bows, and there he sank down, crouching, and no one spoke to him.

The Daredevil rounded Eastern Point, and down the shining harbor, all sails set, came gayly in. They were almost home.

Straightway there started out upon the winter sea a strong, sweet tenor, like a cry. It was Jack's voice, — everybody knew it. He stood by himself in the bows, back to them, singing like an angel or a madman, — some said this, some said the other, —

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me!  
Let me hide myself in thee; . . .

Thou must save, and thou alone . . .

When I soar to worlds unknown,  
See thee on thy judgment throne," —

sang Jack.

With the ceasing of his voice, they divined how it was, by one instinct, and every man sprang to him. But he had leaped and gained on them.

The waters of Fairharbor seemed themselves to leap to greet him as he went down. These that had borne him and ruined him buried him as if they loved him. He had pushed up his sleeves for the spring, hard to the shoulder, like a man who would wrestle at odds.

As he sank, one bared arm, thrust above the crest of the long wave, lifted itself toward the sky. It was his right arm, on which the crucifix was stamped.

## VII.

White and gold as the lips and heart of a lily, the day blossomed at Fairharbor one June Sunday, when these things were as a tale that is told. It was a warm day, sweet and still. There was no wind, no fog. The harbor wore her innocent face. She has one; who can help believing in it, to see it? The waves stretched themselves upon the beach as if they had been hands laid out in benediction; and the colors of the sky were like the expression of a strong and solemn countenance.

So thought Mother Mary, standing by her husband's side that day, and looking off from the little creature in her arms to the faces of the fishermen gathered there about her for the service. It was an open-air service, held upon the beach, where the people she had served and loved could freely come to her—and would. They had sought the scene in large numbers. The summer people, too, strolled down, distant and different, and hung upon the edges of the group. They had a civil welcome, but no

more. This was a fisherman's affair ; nobody needed them ; Mother Mary did not belong to them.

"The meetin's ours," said Rowe Salt. "It's us she's after. The boarders ain't of no account to her."

His brother Jim was there with Rowe, and Jim's wife, and some of the respectable women neighbors. The skipper of the Daredevil was there, and so were many of Jack's old messmates. When it was understood that Mother Mary had adopted Jack's baby, the news had run like rising tide, from wharf to wharf, from deck to deck, — everybody knew it, by this time. Almost everybody was there, to see the baptism. The Fairharbor fishermen were alert to the honor of their guild. They turned out in force to explain matters, sensitive to show their best. They would have it understood that one may have one's faults, but one does not, therefore, murder one's wife.

The scene in the annals and the legends of Fairharbor was memorable, and will be long. It was as strange to the seamen as a leaf thrown over from the pages of the Book of Life, inscribed in an unknown tongue of which they only knew that it was the tongue of love. Whether it spoke as of men or of angels, they would have been perplexed to say.

Into her childless life, its poverty, its struggles, its sacrifices, and its blessed hope, Mother Mary's great heart took the baby as she took a man's own better nature for him ; that which lay so puny and so orphaned in those wild lives of theirs, an infant in her hands.

Jack's baby — *Jack's* baby and Teen's, as if it had



been anybody else's baby, was to be baptized "like folks." Jack's baby, poor little devil, was to have his chance.

The men talked it over gravely ; it affected them with a respect one would not anticipate, who did not know them. They had their Sunday clothes on. They were all clean. They had a quiet look. One fellow who had taken a little too much ventured down upon the beach ; but he was hustled away from the christening, and ducked in the cove, and hung upon the rocks to dry. One must be sober who helped to baptize that baby.

This was quite understood.

They sang the hymn, Jack's hymn and Teen's : of course they sang the Rock of Ages ; and Mother Mary's husband read "the chapter" to them, as he was used, and spoke to them ; and it was so still among them that they could hear each wave of the placid sea beat evenly as if they listened to the beating of a near and mighty peaceful heart. Mother Mary spoke with them herself a little. She told them how she took the child, in despair of the past, in hope of the future ; in pain and in pity, and in love ; yearning over him, and his, and those who were of their inheritance, and fate, their chances, and their sorrows, and their sins. She told them of the child's pure heart within us all, which needs only to be mothered to be saved ; which needs only that we foster it, to form it ; which needs that we treat it as we do other weak and helpless things, whether in ourselves or in another. What was noble in them all, she said, was to them like this little thing to her. It was a trust. She gave it to them, so she

said, as she took the baby, here before their witnessing, to spare him from their miseries, if she might.

They were touched by this, or they seemed to be ; for they listened from their souls.

“ We ’d oughter take off our hats,” somebody whispered. So they stood uncovered before the minister, and Mother Mary, and Jack’s poor baby. The sacred drops flashed in the white air. Dreamily the fishermen heard the sacred words : —

“ In the name of the Father : And of the Son : And of the Holy Ghost. Amen.”

But no one heard the other words, said by Mother Mary close and low, when she received the child into her arms again, and bowed her face above it : —

*“ My son, I take thee for the sake and for the love of thy father, and of thy mother. Be thou their holy ghost.”*

But the fishermen, used not to understand her, but only to her understanding them, perceiving that she was at prayer, they knew not why, asking of Heaven they knew not what, — the fishermen said : —

“ Amen, Amen.”

## THE MADONNA OF THE TUBS.

"Now there!" said Ellen Jane Salt; "I'm tired seein' a passel of folks squealin' at a snail shell."

It happened that much the same view of the case was occupying Miss Helen Ritter at the same moment; the chief difference being that the summer boarder's view was not dependent upon expression, while that of the "native" (as usual) was.

It was what is called a burning fog that day. Miss Ritter was sitting on the cliff under a Japanese umbrella. Twenty people were sitting under Japanese umbrellas. Hers, she thanked Heaven, was of ivory-color, plain and pale. No Turkey red flaunted fiercely, nor purple mandarin sprawled hysterically, against indigo skies above her individual head. There is a comfort in distinction, even if it go no farther than a paper sunshade. Miss Ritter enjoyed the added idiosyncrasy of sitting under hers alone. She was often alone.

In July the seaside is agreeable; in September, irresistible; in October, intoxicating. In August, one does not understand it; one comes up suddenly against its "other side," as against peculiarities in the character of a friend known for years, and unexpectedly putting the affection to a vital test.

In August the sun goes out, and the thick weather comes in. The landlady is tired, and the waitress

slams the plate ; the fog-bell tolls, and the beach is sloppy ; the fog-whistles screech, and one may not go a-sailing ; the puddings and sauces have grown familiar, and one has read too many novels to stand another, and yet not enough to force one back, for life's sake, on a "course of solid reading." In August one's next neighbor is sure it was a mistake not to spend the season at the mountains. In August the babies on the same corridor are sick. In August one has discovered where the milk is kept, and frightful secrets of the drainage are gossiped in ghastly whispers by the guests who complain of the dinners when the young married lady who rowed by moonlight with another fellow has left the place, and a temporary deficiency of scandal. In August one's own particular beach is swarming and useless, one's especial reef is populated and hideous, nay, one's very crevice in the rock is discovered and mortgaged to the current flirtations, and all nature, which had seemed to be one's homestead, becomes one's exile. In August there are hops, and one wants to go away. In August there are flies, and the new boarder.

It is the new boarder who is overaudible about the snail shells. Down there in the gorge, where the purple trap glitters at half-tide in great volcanic veins that seem to pulsate yet through the cliff with the fire imprisoned there—who knows when?—and where the beaded brown kelp deepens to bronze, and then runs to tarnished gold in the wet, rich pulpy recession of the ebb, the new boarder aboundeth. So the snails, — brown, green, orange, lemon, gray, and white, — the tiny shells, mere flecks of color, moved sluggishly by their cell of hidden con-

sciousness and will, like certain larger lives that beneath a mask of stagnation palpitate, — the snails, as I say, interest the new boarder. He saunters down in groups, in clans, in hordes, defiling through the trap gorge — disproportionately feminine, sparsely but instructively masculine, and eternally infantile. He views the attractions of the spot first enthusiastically, then calmly, now indifferently, and drifts away at the third stage of feeling, possibly an object of curiosity or envy, in his turn, to the snail, who has to stay. The first day he screams (I must be pardoned if I use the generic masculine pronoun in this connection) at the snails; the second day he observes them without screaming; the third he does n't observe them at all. His number is infinite, and his place is never vacant. His lady types wear wild roses in their belts, invariably succeeded by daisies, and rigorously followed by golden-rod. It is an endless procession of the Alike, or, we may say, of the great North American Average.

Decidedly on the fortunate side of the average is the element that is creeping into Fairharbor — one should say stepping in, for that end of averages never creeps, to be sure, — the element not vociferous over snails, and scantily given to floral decoration; an element represented, for instance, by Miss Ritter, who, seeking Fairharbor for many a summer because, among other reasons, it gave her that closest kind of seclusion, isolation in a crowd with which one has not historic social relations, has sadly discovered of late that her dear, rough, plain rocks and waves and boarding-houses are becoming semi-fash-

ionable, with a threat even of classically abandoning the compound. Already Fairharbor has her hotel and her daily steamer, her band and her "distinguished visitors," her mythical company, organized to sweep up the huge solitudes at five dollars a foot, roadway forty feet wide thrown in, and wells if you can find any water in them. Already she has her landaus and her toilets, her French maids and her ladies who protect the complexion. Already the faithful old stagers, haughtily unconscious, are stared at for their thick boots and beach dresses and gorgeous coats of tan, and their way of sitting in the sand like crabs after their vigorous baths, in which they do *not* jump up and down, but swim sturdily, battling with the sharp North shore waters, and not expected to scream.

Miss Ritter, a conspicuous figure on the cliff's edge above the lava gorge, might be called an unconscious link between Fairharbor past and Fairharbor to be, possessing perhaps the better points in both types of "summer people," luxuriously dissatisfied with them, with herself, with the world, even just now with Fairharbor. In her white flannel dress and white hat, with the pale flame-colored tie at her throat, and the reflection from the pale sunshade upon her, she had a select, almost severe look, which was not lessened by any depreciation of effect in motion when she rose and walked. She had a stately walk, and reminded one of a calla, as she turned her head slowly and stood full to view, tall and serious.

There was no sunset that night; it was a dog-day,



damp and dead; the fog had thickened, and was crawling in like fate; the bell tolled from the lighthouse two miles away, and the east wind bore the sound steadily in.

Already the boarder children, who insisted on going in the skiff, could not be seen an eighth of a mile out at the island's edge beyond the lava gorge; and the fisherman, whose children knew better, pushed them with a kiss from his knees as he drew in his dory for the rescue, to comfort a distracted parent (in a red parasol) and another one (rumored to be a clergyman, but just now in a bathing suit), whose inharmonious opinions but harmonious anxiety were the excitement of the hour upon the beach. The bathing suit had, unhappily for him, allowed the children to go. The red parasol had always said they would be drowned.

"Don't ye fret," said the fisherman, with a slow grin. "They stole my old punt, an' she leaks so 't'll keep 'em busy bailin', and they *can't* get fur. I'll fetch 'em this time, but next time keep 'em to hum. Why, there ain't a *dog* in Fairharbor 'd set out rowin' thick as this, 'thout he hed to go for a doctor or see to his trawls; he'd *know* better. But you land-lubbers never do know nothin'; you don't know enough to know when *to* be skeered. — H' are ye, Miss Ritter?" as she passed him, suddenly gliding down the cliff, and up the wet, uncordial beach.

"That's like you, Henry. Your tongue is bound to take the edge off your good deeds somehow, like plated silver, whereas you know, half the time, it's the solid thing underneath. Now you'll scour the ocean after those children, and do just as well as if you had n't scolded about it."

"Better — a sight better!" chuckled Henry. He ran splashing through the water in his huge red leather boots, pushing the dory off with a mighty shove. He moved the oars with a fisherman's superb leisure; his massive figure looked as if it were etched for a moment on the mist, whose color and the color of his old oil-clothes blurred together till there seemed to be only the outline of a man. As boat and boatman grew dimmer to the view, the ghostly rower turned and shot back one parting word at the red parasol: —

"Look-a-here! Jest you stop yowlin', won't ye? You'll *skeer* them young 'uns overboard. Ef you want me to fetch 'em, lemme do it in peace."

With this, the fog, with whose terrible and mysterious swiftness no man may intermeddle, shut down.

"Like the curtain of death," Miss Ritter thought, looking over her shoulder, when man and boat and voice had vanished utterly. She was not given to too much consideration of the lot of her fellow-men, perhaps; her sympathies were well regulated, but not acute. Although from Boston, she was not a philanthropist by avocation; she took people as they came, or went — good-naturedly enough, but not uncomfortably; she had a touch of the irresponsibility belonging to professional artists; she herself did not even paint tea-cups.

In Fairharbor, for instance, it would have been easy to make one's self miserable. She meant to treat her neighbors as a lady should; but why cultivate neuralgia of the emotions over the fate of the

fleets ? It was therefore hardly characteristic, and struck her for the moment, in an artistic sense, curiously, as part of the "effect" of the whole wet, dull afternoon, that she should feel almost moved by the every-day incident of Henry and the dory and the fog. He seemed to her suddenly like a symbol of the piteous Fairharbor life ; as one puts an eagle, an arrow, a shield, or whatever, upon the seal of a commonwealth or upon a coin, so Fairharbor might take Henry ; so she gave up her vigorous young life that "went down to the sea in ships ;" and so, ghosts before their time, her doomed men trod her shores.

"I believe I must stop and see Ellen Salt about some laces," said Miss Ritter, uncertainly, to the lady boarder, — with daisies and a mandarin parasol, now pulpy with the fog, and offering acute temptation to stick one's fingers between the ribs, — the lady who joined her on the beach. It did not matter about the laces, but it mattered to have to talk to that stack of daisies just then. The lady's leather belt was tight, and the flowers seemed to gasp as if they had got into corsets.

This was the lady who always complained of the breakfasts, and knew how often every gentleman in the hotel came to see his wife. She was an idle, pretty, silly thing ; abnormally, one might say inhumanly, luxurious. She wore thirty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds, because it was understood she was afraid to leave them in the hotel rooms. She gave three dollars to the subscription for the Fairharbor widows of two hundred men drowned last year : she had acquired a theory that one must not make paupers.

As Helen Ritter struck off alone through the fog, down the lane, behind the wild-rose thicket, under the willow-trees, and against the big bowlders, to Mrs. Salt's little, old, unpainted cottage, — picturesquely gray, and proportionally damp, — she was thinking neither of the daisy and diamond boarder, nor of two hundred drowned fishermen, nor even of Ellen Jane and the weekly wash.

So far as her thoughts had organization rather than pulp, and might have been nautically termed more conscious than jelly-fish, she was thinking — still in that same amusing, outside, artistic sense — of herself; looking on, as she looked on at the summer people and the fishermen, with an unimpassioned, critical eye.

Too well we all know those mad or inspired moments (generally ours on dull afternoons) when we seem to catch up the whole of life at a handful, and fling it from us utterly in a kind of scorn that may be wholly noble or trivial, according to the impulse of the motion or the direction of the aim.

She, — Helen Ritter, of Beacon Street, Boston, twenty-eight years old, an orphan, a Brahman (rich, if one stopped to think of that), and a beauty, member of Trinity Church and the Brain Club, subscriber to the Provident Association, and stockholder in the Athenæum, fond of her maid, her relatives, her *bric-à-brac*, and her way, — walking to her washer-woman's through the fog, and suffering one of these supreme moments, could have flung her whole personality into Nirvana or the ocean by one sweep of her white-clad arm that day, and felt well rid of it. To be sure, nothing had happened.

That, perhaps, was the trouble ?

"I am a type," said the young woman aloud. "I am nothing but a type; I have no 'use nor name nor fame' under the skies, beyond standing for the representative, like people that make the groups in tourists' photographs. I may thank Heaven if I don't do it inartistically, I suppose; and meanwhile pay my laundress. I wonder why I keep on coming to Fairharbor ?"

Why, indeed ? Helen Ritter to Helen Ritter, in the scorn of her heart and the depth of it, would give no answer to that question, but hit it with her fine, cool look as she would any other social intruder, and passed it by upon the other side. She was young for life to have come to what she called its end.

"Yet the light of a whole life dies,  
When love is done,"

sang the musical boarder in the hotel parlor beyond the rose thicket. The east wind bore the sound over the bowlders, through the willow boughs, driving with the fog, as if both had been ghosts from the hidden sea.

Why cling to the old spot where the light of life had once been kindled and quenched ? Why dog, like a spirit unreleased, the haunts of that blessed and accursed vitality ? No, no. She could not curse it: no. Whom or what had she to curse ? Fate, perhaps, or accident, or a man's terrible dullness of intellect before the nature of the woman he loves, or her own doom, or her own "way" — that unlucky way which as often wrought her mischief from being

misunderstood as from being to blame, but which was none the less likely to be to blame for that.

“Thè mind has a thousand eyes,”

sang the summer boarder with laboriously accelerated emphasis, for the gentlemen had come in from the beach, and were listening,

“The mind has a thousand eyes,  
And the heart but one,  
Yet the light of a whole life dies,  
When love is done.”

“Well, there !” said Ellen Jane Salt, “do come in out of this thick weather. Fog’s good for your flannel dress ; bleach it out ; but my ! ain’t you sloppy ? You got drabbled on the beach. Just you step up agen my tubs and let me wash out that hem o’ your’n jest as you be. I’ll stand you up to the stove after, and dry you up a mite, too, and iron you off, and you’ll be slick as ever. Pity ! I did you up only last Saturday, you know—There ! I’m drove to death, but I can’t stand seein’ good washin’ spoiled like that,—and you, too, punctual as you are with the price,—so many dozen, and so late in the season besides. No ; the laces was n’t extry, thank you. I’d be ashamed if I could n’t do a bit of valingceens for *you*. But there ! I was up till two o’clock this mornin’ ironin’ Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone’s fluted nigh’gownds (thread lace, every scrap). She had six. I’m drove out of my wits, and Rafè had to have one of his spells at three, poor little fellow ! just as I’d got a snooze in my close atop of the bed-spread, for it was so hot with the heavy ironin’ fire, and us so near the cook-stove. There !”



Ellen Jane Salt was a little woman, thin and keen of outline; the kind of woman sure to marry a large man, and rule him roundly. She had very bright blue eyes, sunken with want of sleep; and the chiseling of care about her temples and her mouth told that her first youth had passed in hand-to-hand struggles with life, from which middle age gave no prospect of releasing her. The line between her lips indicated that nature had given her a sweet temper, which experience might push hard now and then under stress of circumstances. She had what it would be sufficient to call a busy voice, pitched like the American feminine voice of her class, but without a shrewish note; on the whole, making allowance for the national key, what might be called a motherly or wifely voice. She had the curious, watching look common to the women of Fairharbor, acquired from that observation of the sea with which the summer boarder is unfamiliar. A little anxious running down to the beach now, or the wharf then, when the fog sets in; a little more restless climbing of the cliff when the wind rises; this peering for the dory before dawn, or searching for the sail at dusk, or scanning the headland by moonlight, or asking the dead of night to give the absent head-light to straining eyes, or beating about over the downs in the November gales with the glass which trembles in the aching arm before the blank horizon, — these things, we see, give optical results which no social oculist has distinctly classified. For the rest, Ellen Jane Salt wore a navy blue calico dress, well fitted (by herself) to a pleasant figure, and tucked up over the hips under a gray crash washing apron, on which

she wiped her steamed and dripping hands to give Miss Ritter greeting. There was a strip of tourist's ruffling in the neck of the navy blue calico, and the house, like the mistress, was as neat as a honeycomb. One might almost say, without straining a point, that there was a certain poetry in her avocation; for Ellen Jane Salt's old cottage seemed to the chance visitor a kind of temple of cleanliness. The small kitchen was sunny and sweet; and despite the disproportion of the ironing-table and stove to the environment, the only litter seemed to be the signs of the presence of children, which abounded. Then it must be distinctly understood that Mrs. Salt had a "parlor." What New-Englander has not? Whether his debts be paid or his soul saved we need not stop to inquire; he will attend to that presently; meanwhile, a parlor or die!

In Mrs. Salt's parlor was a carpet of a high-art pattern under reduced conditions, — olive green, to be sure, playing at geometry with Indian red, and sepia brown and black; it was an excellent carpet, and protected by a strip of oil-cloth nailed across, like a little plank walk, for the children to travel over to the bedroom beyond. There was a new paper on the walls of the parlor, very clean and very gilt (olive green, of course), and the price per roll such a trifle that a codfish could afford it, as Mrs. Salt had often said; the paperer being Ellen Jane herself, at midnight, after a day's washing, when "he" was asleep.

In the parlor were a black haircloth sofa, a centre-table with a red cloth, a Bible, a copy of "The Youth's Companion," an old "Harper," and a patent-medicine almanac; a chromo called "Innocence

Asleep" (presented with a pound of green tea, and since framed in gilt), and a framed photograph of Rafè; but when we come to Rafè —

Meanwhile, in the parlor there was also "an instrument." Mrs. Salt had privately meant it to be a piano; but Mr. Salt had a bad year haddocking, and that overgrown ambition was silently set aside. At any rate, it was an instrument. It did not matter whether one called it a melodeon or a cabinet organ, or whatever you please; the musical future of the Salt family was thus assured. In a narrower personal sense the instrument was intended for Emma Eliza, who took music lessons in prosperous seasons, and played — to Rafè. Emma Eliza was the oldest daughter, and Rafè was the youngest son. Mrs. Salt had six children — two babies. Rafè was a cripple.

"Was n't that Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone comin' up the beach alongside of you?" began Mrs. Salt promptly. She ironed as she talked, making small ceremony of Miss Ritter, who was an old customer, and regarded quite as one of the family. Mrs. Salt's irons thumped when she was tired or excited, though she would have you understand she knew how to iron scientifically and silently, and no fuss about it. To-night she thumped a good deal.

"She's a good customer, Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone. But there! When I count the yards and yards on her petticoats — dollar a yard, every mite of it — and her nigh'gownds *solid* [thump] valingcens, you might say, and them di'mon's [thump], and beef-tea for Rafè goes so fast at twenty-five cents a pound durin' his spells; and

there! [thump]. Why, Miss Ritter, I did up one dress for that woman last week would ha' paid our rent for a whole year, by the Sassinfras Bitters Almanac; and Biram so sharp on his rent, too, luck or none; an' if a man makes eighty dollars to his trip, or eight cents, it's all the same to Biram come rent-day. But there! that's fishin'. I ain't complainin', and thanks to mercy I can stand at the wash-tub day an' night for 'em long's there's anything to wash. Six weeks ain't much, now, is it? Pretty short season; and no more for a woman to do in Fairharbor rest of the year than there is for a clam. We're like 'em, I guess — just stick in the sand and stay there. But there! I ain't complainin' either; and six children do want a sight of things from Janooary to Janooary, as you'd know, if you'd ever had one; and Rafè" —

"Rafè looks pale, I thought," interposed Miss Ritter, glancing into the "parlor," where a little, bent figure sat in a high, padded chair by the window.

The child had a delicate face, refined by suffering, and a singularly sweet mouth; he had long blond hair, which fell over his face as he stooped. There were no other children visible, except the baby, asleep in the crib or cradle at the little cripple's feet. Now and then the boy jogged the cradle with his foot, as he bent over his work or play.

"It's your scrap-book," said Mrs. Salt, in a low voice — "that one you gave him with the chromos and magazines when you come in June. You never see such a sight of comfort as that child gets out o' them things — bless your soul for it! It's the

*prettiness* that pleases him. The boarders give him money sometimes, but he don't pay the same attention to it — it ain't that, you know. There's a kind of *prettiness* about Rafè — like the ladies and gentlemen I do for. He ain't like a fisherman, Rafè ain't, and so sweet of his temper in all his spells. Now last night never a word. His father and me hate to see Rafè suffer."

"I saw Henry on the beach just now," observed Miss Ritter, backing up by the stove, as she was bidden, to dry her white flannel dress hem after Mrs. Salt's professional treatment thereof. The young lady had quite dignity enough even for this awkward and exceedingly warm position, and seemed to fill the little house with a kind of splendor — distant, uncomprehending, accidental — like that gift of the scrap-book. She thought too little about them to know when she did the right thing by poor people, until they told her. She did not mistake her taste for her principles, though they sometimes might. "I saw Henry," said Miss Ritter, in her affable tone, that the washer-woman did not always distinguish from personal friendship. "He was going off in the dory after those Benzine children that always get lost foggy days. I thought he was pretty patient, though he had to have his say about it. All the children were with him, I believe, — Tom and Sue and the bigger baby and the rest."

"There ain't any rest except Emma Eliza," corrected the mother. "Six is enough, gracious knows — and she's gone home with Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone's wash, what there is ready of it. Yes,

there's that about Henry Salt, I will say; he'll *do* anything, but he's got to have his say. Him and me we have words sometimes. I'm always sorry for it afterward. I never mean to. He says he don't mean to nither. But there! men-folks is men-folks, not to say anything of women. Nigh as I can make out, the Lord *made* men-folks to be contrary; but sakes! if you love 'em, what's the odds? You've only got a bigger chance to do for 'em, and mother 'em up. They're a kind of boys, men are, and have to be mothered up somehow by their women. They need pettin' and fussin' and strokin' the right way, and hear jest how they feel when they're a mite sick, and fuss over 'em as if you s'posed they was dangerous, and not to say nothin' when you're ten times worse yourself—that's men. I don't say I don't have my tempers out myself—like an influenzy, got to come—*sometimes*. But there! I've got a good husband, dear. Nor there ain't a stiddier, nor soberer, nor better, goes to the Banks from Fairharbor year in, year out. I'm very fond of Henry. We've had a happy life, me and Henry."

"A happy life?"

Miss Ritter looked about the fisherman's cottage; at the small rooms crowded with the signs of surplus life and harassing economies; at the sober, sleeping baby, who seemed to have been born in a hard season, and bore the inheritance of poverty and anxiety in the lines of his unconscious face; at the crippled boy stooping in the window against the dull square of light made by the conflict of the fog and dusk beyond; at the nervous motions of the tired



woman at the ironing-table. Ellen Jane Salt did not pass for a heroine, but she had aches enough and ailments enough to have put Miss Ritter or Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone under treatment from a fashionable physician for the rest of her life. Any lady who felt as she did would have gone to bed. The fisherman's wife washed and ironed; thus Rafè had beef-tea — and the instrument. Somehow even the instrument did not make the fisherman's cottage seem an abode of luxury. "I can always sell it," Mrs. Salt said, when approached by good sociologists on the subject of this extravagance. "It's good property; it keeps the children to home evenings; and Rafè — why, I got it for *Rafè*."

The washer-woman stood straight at her ironing-table, and lifted her head as she followed Helen Ritter's look about the cottage, on whose sparse comforts the advancing dusk was setting heavily.

"Yes," she said, very gently, "Henry and me have had a happy life — him a fisherman, me a washer-woman — six children — and Rafè — and poor. Well, there! there's been times poor don't *say* it — and hard. It's been pretty hard. But you see, my dear, me and Henry *like* each other. I suppose that makes a difference."

"It must make a difference," repeated Miss Ritter drearily. She went abruptly into the darkening parlor, kissed the crippled child upon the forehead, said some little pleasant thing to him, and came restlessly back. Rafè climbed down from his high chair laboriously, took up his crutch, and followed her. His mother was lighting the kerosene lamp, and the poor place leaped suddenly into color. Rafè pulled at the

navy blue calico dress. The washer-woman snatched off her wet crash apron, and drew the little fellow — alas! never perhaps to be too big a fellow for his mother's lap — into her arms. The ironing-table and the clothes-basket and a wash-tub of rinsing clothes closed into the perspective of this plain picture; and Rafè's crutch, where it had fallen in the foreground, reminded Miss Ritter somehow of the staff in the little St. John scenes that we all know.

"The Madonna — of the Tubs," she murmured.

"What, ma'am?" asked Rafè.

"There! there!" said the Madonna; "go and watch for father, Rafè." She handed him his crutch with her kiss — a half-savage kiss, like that of some wild, thwarted maternal thing — and the child limped eagerly away.

"He must have found them Benzine children by this time," Mrs. Salt ran on, taking to her irons again nervously. "But, fact is, I'm *never* easy in my mind when Henry's in thick weather, not even off-shore. It's hard being a woman in Fairharbor. Our minister said, says he, when he first come to town he noticed all the women-folks called it 'the dreadful sea.' I guess, come to think of it, we do — jest as you'd say 'Monday mornin',' or 'cold weather,' and never take notice of your words. You see, I'm kind o' down to-night, tell the truth, Miss Ritter. — Yes, Rafè, watch for papa, dear. He'll be disappointed if he does n't see Rafè first. — I would n't tell the child just yet. You see, his father's got to go to the Banks. Rafè hates to have his father go to the Banks. He worries. We thought we'd get along, — for me and Rafè do worry so, — but Henry's

had an awful poor season off-shore. He thinks he's got to go. He ain't made but twenty-two dollars and sixty-three cents this summer. It's safer off-shore, take it all, though it's bad enough, Miss Ritter, fix it as you will. It was off-shore his boat keeled over, eight years ago the 23d of September, not more 'n two miles off the light — him and Job Ely and Peter Salt and William X. Salt went down in a squall, and I'd been nervous all day; so when it struck I got the glass, and took Emma Eliza — for she was little then, but my oldest born, and all I had to speak to that would understand — and me and Emma Eliza we walked over the downs, and over the downs, blowed about agen the wind, with the glass, and stood watchin'; and, my gracious God, Miss Ritter, I saw that there boat go down before my livin' eyes!"

It was an old story, told to how many neighbors and "summer people" how many times! but at this point the fisherman's wife gasped and blanched. She had never been able to finish it; each time she thought she should. She took up her flat-irons hastily, for scalding tears were dropping on Mrs. Hannibal P. Harrowstone's fluted skirt.

"He h'isted on to the keel, her bottom upmost," she said, in a lower voice, "and they all h'isted on and held, and a lumber schooner from Maine come along full canvas, but it took an eternal punishment, lookin' through the glass, to get her swung to and dory off. But they was saved — him and Job Ely and Peter Salt and William X. Salt — and him; but they looked like flies before my eyes, for the sea

broke over 'em, and they kep' a-slippin', and so me and Emma Eliza put down the glass and come home and set down; and Emma Eliza made me a cup of tea — for I was that gone, and her so little to do for me. And there we set, for we could n't do nothin' till he come home at five minutes past nine o'clock, bustin' open the door — so ! — drippin' wet, and pale as his own corpse, and I says, 'Henry! Henry!' and he says, 'Nelly Jane!' and we says no more, for someways we could n't do it. But Emma Eliza cried — for she used to bellow, that child did, when she was little — enough to wake last year's mackerel catch, and then she made her father's tea, for I was that gone; and you see, Miss Ritter, it was next month Rafè was born, and he was born, my dear — as he is."

"Marm, I don't *see* my fa—ther," interrupted Rafè, in his gentle, drawling voice, from the open front door.

"And so, as I says," proceeded Mrs. Salt, more briskly, "fishin' is fishin', off-shore or no. But I have n't *no* confidence in the Grand Banks. I wish my husband had n't got to go this fall. I ain't any time to be nervous, but there's always time to see things. You know, you *see* him so, before your eyes, all sorts of ways, when he's that far from you — fogs, or a gale, or a squall — drownin' mostly, and callin' after you, if you're his wife and have always done for him. Even a headache he'd run to you about. And to stand here ironin', a thousand miles away, and him maybe" —

"Marm," called Rafè, "I see my fa—ther! I see my fa—ther!"

"Well, there!" cried Ellen Jane Salt, putting down her irons tremendously. She blushed like a girl, and bustled about, "picking up" here and there, and hurrying to fry the cod for supper. She almost forgot her young lady customer, who was glad just then to slip away.

On the way down the lane she met the fisherman and his children hurrying home; but in the dusk they passed with a pleasant, neighborly nod. Miss Ritter was sad, and Henry Salt was hungry; so she with her kindly "Well, Henry!" and he with his civil "H' are yer, Miss Ritter?" went their ways. It so happened from one trifling cause and another — she was called to Boston earlier than usual, and what not — that this was the last time she spoke to the good fellow that season, as she afterward remembered.

She turned in the dark lane, and watched the group scrambling home in their happy-go-lucky fashion — Henry rode the bigger baby (he was known in the Salt family as "the other baby") pigback all the way; Sue and Tommy trudged and toddled, snatching at his oil-clothes, which were wet and slipped from their little round red hands.

Henry Salt sang, as he carried "the other baby," a snatch of a sailor's song Miss Ritter had never heard before: —

"Give the wind time  
To blow the man down."

Past the rose thicket, by the great boulder, dim, in the dark and the now drenching fog, man and children, pushing merrily home, made one confused group, like a centaur or a torso to the watcher's eye.

The cottage door was wide open. What a splendor of light leaped out ! Was it only that kerosene lamp upon the ironing-table ? How it beat back the crawling fog, which made as if it would enter first, and was denied.

“ Give the wind time,”

rang the fisherman’s happy bass.

From outside, through the door, one could see clearly and far. All the little house seemed to lean out to draw them in ; the sweet, tidy, homely things grew gilded and glorious, and had a look as if they stirred ; even the instrument could be seen deep in the parlor, with the reduced high-art paper. In the doorway, once again, the Madonna of the Tubs had found that fine, unconscious attitude — half stooping to take Rafè, who had stood too long upon his little crutch. He put up his hand and stroked her cheek.

“ Oh, marm, I ’ve *got* my fa—ther ! ”

“ Give the wind time

To blow the man down,”

sang Henry Salt. Laughing, he snatched and kissed the child — the mother too, perhaps. Down there in the dark wet lane Miss Ritter could not see, or her eyes failed her somehow.

For a moment the group stood in the open door in a kind of glory. Then Emma Eliza came in, and, putting down her empty clothes-basket, and going straight to the instrument, began — it seemed that Rafè asked — to play. A waltz, perhaps ? A minstrel melody ? Some polka learned of the music-teacher ? A merry ditty flung at fate and dashed



at life and death, between whose equal mysteries these poor souls wrenched their brave and scanty happiness? My musical friend — no. Emma Eliza sang a hymn. She sang that venerable Sunday-school jingle known as “Pull for the Shore.”

Rafè joined in it sweetly, leaning on his crutch. His mother sang it shrilly while she fried the cod. Henry Salt sang it merrily while he hung his oil-clothes on the nail behind the door. Sue and Tommy and the other baby sang it anyhow; and the baby in the crib waked up and stretched his arms out to the instrument.

“Pull for the shore, sailor, pull for the shore!  
Heed not the rolling waves, but bend to the oar!  
Pull for the shore, sailor, pull for the shore!”

Then the door shut suddenly; the Madonna was blotted from sight; blackness replaced the sweet and homely halo; only the voices of the fisher-people, expressing what they knew of happiness in the sombre, sacred words that held the terror and the danger of the sea, echoed faintly down the dark and now deserted lane.

“If this were a story in need of a heroine,” said Helen Ritter as she turned, “it is a vacant position which I should not be asked to fill. And yet I’d *be* my washer-woman to be” —

“Give the wind time  
To blow for the shore.”

rang out the gruff bass voice that wind and weather had roughened in shouting “Ship ahoy!” For Henry had musically forgotten himself, as will be seen, and Emma Eliza, at the instrument, came to a severe halt to set him straight.

Perhaps if it had not been for William X. Salt it would never have happened.

Tennyson, I think, or it might well be, has sketched a seaport town in one line which runs : —

“ And almost all the village had one name.”

The fishing town of Fairharbor was generously furnished with the appropriate name of Salt. There were great Salts and small Salts, rich and poor Salts, drunk and sober Salts, Salts making money in the counting-rooms and Salts earning it upon the wharves, Salts in the fish firms and Salts before the mast — Abraham L. Salt, for instance, who owned the schooner (herself Abby E. Salt by name), and William X. Salt and Peter Salt and Henry Salt, who sailed in her to the Grand Banks, after the golden-rod and the summer people were gone, when there were no Japanese umbrellas, and nobody screamed at the snails, when there was no washing by the dozen to be had, and only now and then a letter from Miss Ritter — in November, just before Thanksgiving, when the weather had turned cold and the wind blew from the north.

Nothing is easier than to find a reason for the unpleasant in ourselves in causes outside of ourselves, and yet, in spite of this calm, proverbial philosophy, it is probably true that if it had not been for William X. Salt it would never have happened. At least Ellen Jane said so, and will say so to her dying day. For from whatever cause — divine, diabolic, or human — whether because William X. Salt treated Henry, or because Henry allowed William X. to

treat him, or because Heaven permitted or hell decreed — the truth remains that Henry and Ellen Jane Salt, like many another wedded pair loving less than they, like many another loving even more than they, quarreled; but the worst of it was that they quarreled the night that Henry set sail in the Abby E. Salt, with William X. and Peter and Job Ely and the other fellows — ten in all, for the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

William X. Salt had given him the whiskey, for, as I say, it was turning cold, and the wind blew bitterly from the north, and the men had worked till they were fretted and chilled, getting their traps and trawls aboard. Now Henry was a sober man, for the most part, and meant to keep so; or his wife meant to keep him so, which is much the same thing; and I should libel him were I to say that he came home to supper drunk. He was not drunk. Strictly speaking, he was not sober. In point of fact, he was what may be charitably called sensitive to liquor, owing to some passing familiarity of the nervous system with its effects in early youth; and it took little enough to make it clear that he had better have taken none at all. As a rule, Henry recognized this physiological fact. That November night he was cold and tired and “down,” and William X., who was sober sometimes, but so seldom that, by the law of chances, this could hardly have been one of the times, was moved to treat at the wrong moment or in the wrong way; and if Henry had taken a little less, or even a little more, and come home to his wife drunk, it might not have happened, we must admit, for he was jolly and silly when he was drunk;

but he got only so far as the cross stage, and cross he was — it need not be denied — to Ellen Jane.

What was it all about? What is it ever all about, when two who love each other dearer than any great thing on earth fall sharp asunder because of some little one — too little to find? The pity of love is that it is given to small creatures: let us not forget that itself is great.

Perhaps it was the door that slammed; perhaps it was the coffee that did not settle; it may be that the baby cried, or the chowder burned their tongues, or somebody upset the milk pitcher, or the lamp smoked, or the ironing fire was burning coal too fast, or the barberry sauce (brought out to honor the occasion) had not enough molasses in it, or the griddle-cakes did not come fast enough, or there was a draught somewhere — who could say? Neither of these married lovers, perhaps, after it was all over. Less than any one of these almost invisible causes has broken hearts and homes before, and will, world without end, till lovers learn the infinite preciousness of love, and human speech is guarded like human chastity.

In short, then and there, on the night, on the hour of their separation, Henry and Ellen Jane Salt "came to words."

She had been crying all day, poor woman, because he had to go. She dreaded a November voyage intelligently and insanely. Rafè had cried too, but he hid in the parlor to do it. The children were all sober except the baby and the other baby. The house was illuminated — there were two kerosene

lamps and the lantern. All Henry's mending was tearfully and exquisitely done. There had been fresh doughnuts fried, and a squash pie (extravagantly) made to please him. Emma Eliza, at the instrument, played the "Sweet By-and-by." Her mother was dressed in her best calico, — a new one never at the wash-tub, one of those chocolate patterns with strong-minded flowers that women fancy, Heaven and the designers know why. Her hair was brushed and her collar fresh, and she had looked as pretty as a pink, poor thing, dashing away the tears when he came in; ready for all the little feminine arts that make men cheerful at the cost of women's nerve and courage.

Then it happened, — whatever it was, — and the glow went out of her face as the gloom gathered on his, and that sweet look about her mouth settled away, and the smouldering fire burned up slowly from a great depth in her sunken, tired blue eyes; and with a breaking heart she blamed him; and with a barbarous tongue he admired her; and their words ran as high as their nerves were strained; and because they loved each other dearly every harsh word they said scorched them like coals of white fire, on which one pours more to cover up the blaze; and because they were man and wife, and more to each other than all the world besides, they said, each to each, bitterly dashing out blind words, what neither would have said to friend or neighbor for very shame's sake; and so it came about that on this night they were in high temper, than which none had been really sharper, perhaps, in all their wedded lives.

"There is something always wrong about this house, curse it!" cried the man whom William X. Salt had treated.

"There's nothing wrong in this house but him that's setting sail from it," cried the woman whom the man had scolded.

They were flashing words, — up and out and over, — and, had it fared differently with them, at another time a sob and a kiss would have met above the ashes of the sorry scene, and there would have been an end, and peace to it.

But the Abby E. Salt weighed anchor at eight o'clock. It was quarter past seven when Henry pushed back from the half-eaten supper, and took up his old hat to go. He had over a mile to walk, and a ferry to catch, and what not to do; he was already late. There was no time to let the sweet waters of repentance come to the flood. He bade the children good-by sullenly, kissed Rafè, and, after an instant's hesitation, pushed open the door. He said he must hunt up Job Ely, and so saying, and saying no more than this, he went out of the house. He did not look at his wife.

Her pretty, weary face had flushed a dangerous scarlet during the scene which had passed. Now it turned a dreadful white. She stood quite still. She seemed to have no more moral power to move after the man than an unsought girl or a woman repulsed. Her whole feminine nature was quivering pitifully. When a man is rough with a woman he forgets that he hurts two creatures, — the human and the woman, — and that he hurts the second more than it can hurt himself by just so much as the essence of the



feminine nature is a fact superimposed upon the human. But as the mystery of this knowledge is one that princes and philosophers have not yet commanded, who should expect it of the fisherman Henry Salt ?

The children during this unhappy scene had stood silent. To their father's quickness of temper they were used ; he scolded one minute and kissed the next ; but the usual had become the unexpected, and a kind of moral embarrassment filled the cottage. The baby and the other baby began to cry ; Emma Eliza, whether from some rudimentary idea of calling her father's attention, or from some daughterly delicacy which led her to get herself out of the way, sat down at the instrument and vigorously played "Pull for the Shore" on the wrong key ; Rafè got up on his crutch and hobbled to the door ; the wife alone stood quite still.

The wind was rising fiercely from the north, as has been said, and bursting in at the open door, caught it and clutched it to and fro, closing but not latching, and noisily playing with it, as if with a shaken mood that could not fix itself. For the instant, the master of the house seemed to be shut out, and seemed possibly to one outside to have been *slammed* out by hands within.

"Let me by, Rafè ; let me by, this minute !" The wife made one bound, and down the wooden steps, where she stood bewildered. No one was to be seen. It was deadly dark, and the wind raved with a volume of sound which seemed to the Fairharbor woman, born and nourished of the blast, to be something intelligent and infernal pitted against her. She flung

her shrill voice out into it: "Henry! Henry! come back and say good-by to me. I'm sorry. Henry! Henry! *Henry!* I'm *sorry!* I'm *sorry!*"

But only the awful throat of the gale made answer. She ran a little way, straining her ears, her eyes, her voice, beating her breast in a kind of frenzy, calling passionately, plaintively, then passionately again; and so, despairing, for she made no headway against the roar of the November nor'-wester, staggered, turned, and stopped.

At this moment, scrambling through the dark, a little figure hit her, hurrying by upon a little crutch.

"I'm goin' to catch my fa—ther," said Rafè.

He pushed on beyond her, his bright hair blown straight like a helmet or visor of gold from his forehead, calling as he went, slipping, daring, tumbling on the sharp rocks, and up again. Down there in the dark, midway of the road she saw a little fellow stop to gather strength and throw the whole force of his sweet young voice like a challenge to the gale:—

"Fa—ther! marm's sorry! (Don't you cry, marm. I *think* he'll answer.) Fa—ther! Fa—ther! marm says she's sorry! Marm is sorry, fa—ther! (Just keep still, marm. I'm *sure* he'll answer.) FA—THER! MARM IS SORRY!"

The crippled child hurled the whole of his little soul and body into that last cry, and then she saw him turn and limp, more slowly, back. He came up to her gently where she stood sobbing in the dark and wind; and as if he had been the parent, one might say, and she the child, he patted her upon the hand.

"I told you I'd catch him, marm — *dear* marm," added Rafè.

She shook her head incredulously, convulsive with her tears, turning drearily to go back. She hardly noticed Rafè in that minute. The wife was older than the mother in her; if stronger, who should say her nay?

"But I caught my fa—ther," persisted Rafè. "He says, says he" —

"Rafè, he could n't, dear."

"Marm, he hollered, 'So be I.'"

"Did your father say that, honest, Rafè?"

She lifted her head piteously, pleadingly, before the child.

"I *think* he did," said Rafè, conscientiously. "I says, 'Fa—ther, marm's sorry'; and he says, 'So be I.'"

"If he says, 'So be I,' God bless you, Rafè! mother's sonny boy."

But with that she began to sob afresh, half with hope and half with misery. The child, whose sympathies were made old and fine by suffering, watched her soberly.

"I think he did," said Rafè stoutly. "*I think* my fa—ther hollered, 'So be I.'"

He lifted the truthful face of an angel in a halo to the poor Madonna in the glimmer of the open door. His yellow hair shone like an aureole about his ardent little face. He would have given his scrap-book just then to say, "I know he did." But Rafè never lied. The other children supposed it was because he was a cripple.

It was in just eleven days that they brought her the news. Abraham L. Salt asked Biram to tell her,

and Biram sent a woman neighbor. The north-wester had blown grandly, as any one might know, straight for the Banks, and blown the Abby E. Salt thither in a smart voyage of four days and a half. After the steady blow the weather thickened, and that which has happened to Fairharbor fishermen, and will happen again, God help them ! till the way of the wind and wave is tamed to human anguish, happened then and there to Henry Salt. The Zephaniah Salt, a fine schooner, about returning from the fishing-grounds, carried the word to the telegraph at Boston, and the telegraph to Abraham L. Salt, as was said ; he to Biram, Biram to the woman neighbor, the woman, praying God's pity, to her.

She did not say it as she meant to. Who of us does hard things as we thought we should ? She walked straight into the cottage, and stood still in the middle of the floor, and began to cry. The first she knew she had caught the little crippled child and put him into his mother's arms, and said, —

“Rafè, tell your poor marm that your father's drowned — for I can't.”

“At the Grand Banks, on the morning of November —, Henry Salt and Job Ely, of Fairharbor, dory-mates, set out from the schooner Abby E. Salt to look after their trawls, and were lost in the fog. Every effort was made in vain to find the unfortunate men. No hope is any longer felt of their safety. The bodies have not been recovered. Salt leaves a wife and six children. Ely was unmarried. The Abby E. Salt belongs to the well-known firm of Abraham L. Salt & Co., of Fairharbor.”

Miss Ritter, idly nibbling at her "Daily Advertiser" before her open cannell fire one bleak December morning, chanced upon the paragraph, which she re-read and pondered long. Ellen Jane had sent no word out of her misery, poor thing! A letter achieved is an affliction to the unlearned, and she had enough to bear without adding that.

"I'd rather do a day's washing any time than write a letter," she used to say. Besides, after all, what would the "boarder lady" care? When it came to the point of bereavement, remorse, widowhood, hunger, cold, and despair, the summer patron seemed as far from the Fairharbor winter as her paper parasol or her "valingcens." Henry Salt had gone the way of his calling, like other men; he had become one of the one or two hundred Fairharbor fishermen over whose fate a comfortable dry-shod world heaves a sigh once a year, when the winter gales blow so hard as to shake the posts of the firm, warm house a little, or even to puff the lace above the sleeping baby's crib in the curtained, fire-lit room. His wife, like other women, was a "Fairharbor widow," and, like other women, must bend her to her fate.

She bowed to it in those first weeks in a stupefaction that resembled moral catalepsy. A reserve such as restrains the hand that writes this page — a page like a bridge over a chasm down which one cannot look, yet over which one must cross perforce — solemnly enwrapped the fisherman's widow in that space between the night when the woman neighbor put the crippled child into his mother's arms, and the advance of the holidays, which come

— God help us! — straight into the ruined as once into the blessed homes.

And so to Fairharbor as to Beacon Street, to Ellen Salt as to Helen Ritter, or you or me, the sacred time which enhances all happiness and all anguish came gently or cruelly, but surely, on; and it was the day before Christmas, and going to snow.

In the sad cottage behind the leafless rose thicket and under the ice-clad bowlders they were all at home early that afternoon: the mother from her dreary attempt and failure to find another neighbor to “wash” on Monday morning; Emma Eliza from the net factory, where she wove seines and hammocks (when the factory was running) at irregular wages, ranging from four dollars a week to none; Tommy and Sue from the district school, where one must have “an education,” even if no father and no dinner. Rafè took care of the baby and the other baby, and was, so to speak, professionally at home. Besides, Rafè himself (indeed, I might say Rafè in particular) was about to become the support of the family. As luck would have it — or as God willed it — a group of marine artists had discovered Fairharbor that year, and were wintering, by the mercies of Providence and the landlady, in the closed hotel, hard at work; among them one, a portrait and *genre* painter, guest of the little company for a week or so, had seen Rafè at a window one day, and, presto! the child’s face — a cherub strayed from Paradise into misfortune, the fellows said — shall go to the exhibition.

Rafè was earning what occurred to him as an



enormous salary, as a model by the hour; he failed to see why Sue had no rubbers or Tommy no coat, or why the kitchen fire burned so cold, or there was no meat for dinner, in view of his monetary receipts. He had often told his mother that he would support her, and begged her not to cry. It did not strike him that he had never seen her cry since his father died.

As Christmas Eve drew on, they were all well in the house. Emma Eliza drew the curtains fast, for the hard and bitter air must melt into snow from very force of resistance to its fate, now any moment, and the house was cold. Rafè asked her to leave one of the kitchen curtains up a little; he had a fancy for looking out on dark nights; he used to stand so, sometimes crooning and singing to himself, his bright hair pressed against the window-pane, and his thin hands up against his temples. Before his father died, Rafè sang "Pull for the Shore" a great deal, standing by that window looking out; sometimes Emma Eliza would catch it up upon the instrument and join. But he did not sing it any more.

The outside door did not latch, — the one that slammed poor Henry out on that last night; it never latched very well; there was no man to fix it now; a carpenter could not be afforded; the women and children had tinkered away at the fastening, in their blundering fashion, with blinding tears. Such are the cruel small ways in which the poor are reminded of their bereavements at every crevice of their lives. Rafè had pushed up the wash-bench finally against the door to keep it in its place.

Mrs. Salt looked about the little group, trying dutiously to smile. She had on a (dyed) black dress; she looked sixty years old; the change in her was ghastly; an indescribable expression had got hold of her face; she seemed like a dead person up and dressed. There was something no less than dreadful in the mechanical gentleness and reserve which had settled down upon this emotional, voluble creature. No accident betrayed her into any acceleration of the voice; the crossdest baby never raised a ruffle in her accent; she had such a monotonous sweetness and bruised patience as seemed like a paralysis of common human nature. Her children could not remember to have had even a rebuke from her since that night when the woman neighbor came in. They had deserved it twenty times.

"Children," she said dully and gently, "I have n't any presents for you this Christmas. It's the first one, I guess. I can't help it, you know, my dears. We are very poor to-night. But I'll build you a big, *hot* fire — it's all I can do. We'll keep Christmas Eve by keeping warm, if we can. The stove don't work, somehow; the lining needs fixing; it needs a man." She hesitated, looking pitifully about the room, at each little sober face.

"Won't that do? Won't that be better than no Christmas at all? I thought mebbe it would. It's all mother's got for you. She could n't do any better. She wanted to. He always set so much by Christmas. He" —

The broken door blew in and slammed against the wash-bench loudly. Rafè went to shut it; but it resisted the little fellow's strength — fell inward

heavily, and with it a huge object thrust itself, or was thrust, along the floor noisily enough.

"It's the expressman!" cried Rafè. "It's Tan and Salt's express cart, for *us*, marm!"

Now the Salt family had never had an express package in all their lives. So intense was the excitement for the moment that it was almost impossible to remember that one's father was drowned. They gathered like bees about the box, which the driver lifted in for them compassionately; even stopping to help Emma Eliza start the cover.

"Seein' ye're only women-folks — of a Christmas Eve. And never in my life did I see a woman could open a *wooden* box. Guess ye'd have to set on it all night if I did n't — and no man else to do for ye" —

But Tan and Salt's express checked himself, and departed hastily from the loosened cover and unfinished sentence, letting in a whirl of the now falling snow as he closed the rattling door. He wished, with all his soul, he had time to fix that latch.

Now in that box — what mystery! what marvel! Emma Eliza thought it was like a "Seaside" novel. Rafè had read fairy tales, and he considered it probable that it was the work of what he called "a *genii*," that flannels and shoes, and a second-hand overcoat, and mittens, and a black blanket shawl, should land on the floor, with flour and coffee and crackers, and a package of tea and sugar, and rubbers for Sue, and a turkey for Christmas dinner, and under all — stockings! There were six pairs of stockings — brown, red, blue, green, gray, and white, each one filled to the knee with Santa Claus knew what — trifles to the giver, ecstasy to the child — all the way down

from Emma Eliza to the baby and the other baby. Ah, well, such things do happen, thank the blessed Christmas spirit, in the homes of the brave and self-helping poor; they do not perhaps often happen so gracefully, we might say so artistically.

"So pretty," cried Rafè — "so *pretty* in her." For when the romance of the expressman was followed by the immensity of a smart Fairharbor hack rolling under the leafless willows to the very door, and Rafè, pulling back the wash-bench again, let in, with a shower of bright snow, Miss Helen Ritter, standing tall and splendid in her furs of silver-seal, it seemed quite what was to be expected; and not one of the poor souls knew, which was the best of it, that the young lady had never done such a thing before in all her life. She had done it now in her own "way" — that whimsical, obstinate, lavish way that sometimes was so wrong and sometimes so right, but this time so sweet and true. Was it her heart that told her how? For her head was painfully uneducated in sociology. She had not a particle of training as a visitor to the poor. She had not a theory as to their elevation. She had never been interested in books concerning their management. She was simply acquainted with her washer-woman, and had approached her as she would any other acquaintance, according to the circumstances of the case. It was a brave, self-helpful family; she knew them; not a drop of pauper blood rolled in the veins of their sturdy bodies. Ghastly poverty had got them; worse was before them; but if any desolate woman and her babes, thrust into their fate, could breast it and not go under, these were they.

As a human being to human beings, Helen Ritter had come; she knew no more, nor thought beyond. She had felt moved to treat them as she would wish to be treated in their places, and she did as she was moved; that was all. If she made no blunder, it was certainly owing to the rightness of her instinct, not to the wisdom of her views.

But who stopped to think of views or instincts in the astounded cottage that Christmas Eve? Not Miss Ritter, stooping, flushed and brilliant, drawn down by children's fingers to her knees upon the kitchen floor among the Christmas litter. Not Rafè, who put up his pale face and kissed her, saying not a word. Not Emma Eliza, who meant to ask her to play a Christmas carol on the instrument, thinking that would be polite. (The instrument, by the way, was drearily seeking a purchaser, poor thing.) Not Sue, nor Tommy, nor the baby, nor the other baby, pulling off the veil which had shielded the feathers of their visitor's dainty bonnet from the snow. Not Mrs. Salt, who came up to take her fur-lined cloak with a soft, "You'll be too warm, my dear," and so showing all the stately, luxurious outlines of the finest figure she had ever "done up," in that sweet and humble attitude, kneeling on the kitchen floor. Not Mrs. Salt, stealing away by herself, silent, still, and changed, and strange — she had scarcely spoken. What ailed her? What would she? Where was she? Helen Ritter, unintroduced to mortal sorrow, hesitated before the bereavement of her washer-woman, but summoned heart at last, and followed, slipping from the children's arms.

Ellen Jane Salt was in her chilly parlor, crouched

alone; she had got into a corner bent over something, and when Miss Ritter came up she was half shocked to see that it was the black blanket shawl.

"I didn't know what ever I was to do for mournin' for him!" The woman looked up, breaking out thus sharply. "You've no idea how they talk about us Fairharbor widows, we so poor, they say, and takin' charity to spend it on our black — and reason, maybe; but ask 'em if it's human natur to break your heart and mourn your dead in colors. Ask 'em if bein' poor puts out human natur. Miss Ritter, I had n't nothin' to mourn for Henry in but this one old dress I dyed before my money went to Biram for the rent, and my cloak was a tan-cólor season before last, and trimmed with bugle trimmin', and my shawl was a striped shawl, with red betwixt, you know. And us without our coal in, me going mournin' for my husband half black, half colors, like a widow that was half glad and half sorry — enough of 'em be — my dear, it *hurt* me. And to think you should think of that, and send me of a Christmas Eve — Oh, my dear, I have n't cried before, but it's the *understandin'* me that breaks me up. Oh, don't notice me, don't mind me. I have n't cried since he was drowned; I have n't darst. Oh, don't you touch mé — oh yes, you may. How soft your arms are! Oh, nobody has held me since he — Oh, my God! my God! my God! I've *got* to cry."

"Come here," said Helen Ritter, sobbing too, "come here and let me hold you, and tell me all about it."

"How *can* I tell you?" moaned the woman. "Oh, it is such a dreadful thing to tell! Oh, my dear, it



is n't his *dying*; it is n't that Henry is *dead*. If that was all, I 'd be a blessed woman — me a widow, and them fatherless, and so poor — I 'd be a blessed woman; and God be thanked to mercy this living night if it only was that my husband had *died*! Oh, how should you know? You never was married; you never had a husband; you never quarreled with the man you loved."

"Hush! hush! hush!" Involuntarily the lady thrust her hand upon the other woman's mouth; then drew it off and patted her silently, stroking her hair and shoulders with exquisite loving motions, as women do to women of their own sort when sorrow is upon them.

"We quarreled," cried Ellen Jane Salt, throwing out her arms, and letting them drop heavily at her side — "we quarreled, Miss Ritter, that very last night, that very last minute, him and me — us that loved each other, man and wife, for seventeen years, and him going to his death from out that door. 'Oh,' he says, 'there's always something wrong about this house!' and he cursed it; but he did n't mean it, poor fellow; he never meant it; for they must have treated him to the wharves to make him say a thing like that — you *know* they must; and I says, 'There's nothing wrong in this house but him that's setting sail from it.' My God! my God! my God! I says those words to him at the very last; and he" —

"Marm, I *told* him you was sorry." Rafè pulled her by the dyed black sleeve. The little fellow's face worked pathetically. He did not know before that he could not bear it to see his mother cry. "I think — I believe — I'm pretty *sure*," said Rafè, "that my fa—ther told me, '*So be I.*'"

Helen Ritter drew the child into her free arm, and so held him, sick at heart, for in that supreme moment the widowed wife seemed to have gone deaf and blind ; she did not notice even Rafè.

“What’s death,” cried Ellen Jane, lifting her wan face to heaven, and sinking with a sickening, writhing motion to her knees, — “what’s death, if *that* was *all*, to man and wife that love each other ? I’ve been cold since Henry died, and I’ve gone hungry — don’t let on to the children, for they don’t know — and I’d *be* cold and hungry ; and if I was to starve, what’s that ? And if I mourned and cried for him, us partin’ kind, why, what is that ? It’s the words between us ! — oh, it’s the words between us ! I dream ’em in my dreams, I hear ’em in the wind, I hear ’em at the instrument when the children sing — it’s the words between us ! Him that courted me and wedded me, the baby’s father — and we loved each other, and we come to words that last, last minute, him going to his death ! My God ! my God ! my God ! . . .

“Miss Ritter, dear, what am I sayin’ ? Send the children off. Crying, Rafè ? Don’t, dear. There ! mother’s sonny boy ; come here. Don’t, Rafè, don’t. Yes, I’ll come and see the Christmas stockings. Let me be a minute. Go, Miss Ritter, with ’em, if you’ll be so good. Kiss me, Rafè. Mother’ll come presently, my son. Let me be a minute, won’t you, by myself.”

They went and left her, as they were bidden, every one. Somebody shut the door of the chilly parlor, not quite to, and so shielded her in for a little, yet did not shut her off alone ; they could not bear to.

Helen Ritter gathered the children about her, among the presents and playthings, but it was hard. Christmas had gone out of the fatherless house. It was not easy for sorrow to play at Christmas Eve. Rafè tried to entertain the lady. He told her he was going to support the family. He told her how he sat as model to the gentleman who painted up at the hotel, and Miss Ritter asked about the pictures, and a little about the painter, but not so much, and so they chatted quietly.

"Ready, mother?" called Rafè, at the half-shut door.

"Presently, my son."

"Coming, mother?" begged Emma Eliza.

"Tumin', mummer?" called the other baby.

"In a minute, yes, my dears."

"Mother, Miss Ritter says she's found somebody to buy the instrument. Mother, Miss Ritter says *she* wants an instrument. She says she'll give a hundred and twenty-five dollars for it. She says she wants an instrument very much. Coming, mother?"

"Yes, my child."

Just as she came out among them, quiet again, and gentle with her strange, dull gentleness, and stood so, a little apart from them, looking on, Rafè got up and went to his window, where the curtain hung half drawn (half-mast, they called it), and looked out. It was snowing fiercely. The lights of the near hotel showed through the white drift. Emma Eliza would walk over with Miss Ritter when she had to go. Miss Ritter said she liked a little snow. How heavy was the calling of the sea! It

was like the chords of a majestic, mighty organ built into the walls of the world.

The children chattered about the artists, and pointed out their rooms yonder, specks of light in the dark hotel. Miss Ritter paid little attention to the artists. She was watching Mrs. Salt—and Rafè.

What ailed Rafè ?

The child had been standing with his face pressed against the window where the curtain hung at half-mast; his yellow hair falling forward looked like a little crown. As he stood he began to croon and hum below his breath.

“He has n’t sung *that* one before since father” — whispered Emma Eliza, but stopped, sobbing. Rafè was humming “Pull for the Shore.”

But what ailed Rafè ? He drew away from the window ; the boy had turned quite pale ; and yet it could not be said that his transparent, delicate face showed fear. He went up slowly to his mother, and pulled her black dress.

“Marm, I see my fa—ther.”

He pointed to the window, against which the storm pelted fast and furious.

“I’ve frightened you, Rafè,” said the mother quietly. She had her great good sense. No one should ever allow her children to be afraid of their father as if he were a vulgar ghost. She patted Rafè, kissed him, and said, “Rafè must n’t say such things.”

“Marm,” persisted the boy, “I saw my fa—ther.”

“It’s the snow, Rafè, you see ; it’s so white —

like him. Rafè must not talk like silly people. Dead folks can't be seen by little boys. There! There's that old latch again, Rafè. How it acts! Go and fix it, dear."

Like a child Rafè obeyed, but like a spirit he pondered, for Rafè had his dual life like the rest of us. Was it vulgar to see ghosts? Clearly it was necessary to push the wash-bench against the door; and though he looked like a spirit, he pushed like a boy. With his knee upon the bench, with his hand upon the latch — But this was the moment when the child's shrill cry sounded and resounded through the house: —

"Oh, marm, I've *got* my fa—ther!"

And, corpse or ghost or man, Henry Salt pushed in the door, hurled over the wash-bench, brushed aside Miss Ritter, strode over the children, and hearing, seeing, knowing nothing else, if alive or dead, whether in earth or heaven, he took his wife, in her black dress, into his arms.

For the most part, as we all know, such things are dreamed of. In Fairharbor they happen. The material of novelists and poets and playwrights, elsewhere woven of air or webbed of fancy to appease the imperious human desire for "a good ending" to a smart fiction, becomes in Fairharbor, now and then, by God's ingenious will, the startling fact.

The sea had given up her dead. One month reckoned of the solemn number, Henry Salt, like fishermen before him and fishermen, please God, to come after him, tossed by the vagaries of the sea

and her toilers, had breasted his way to life and love.

He was a man of sparse words, except when in liquor or in temper, and he took but few, slowly spoken, and with the feint of carelessness or stolidity used by men of his kind to mask the rare and so confusing emotions of a lifetime, to tell his short, true tale :—

“We was lost in the fog and drove by the weather, and we was picked up six days to sea by a trader bound to Liverpool. That’s all. Her name was the Rose of the West — derved silly name for a merchantman. She took me an’ kep’ me — for my dory-mate was frozen, and *him* she heaved overboard — till she hailed the Van Deusencock, of New York city, homeward bound. And that’s about all. The Van Deusencock she took me, and she got in at midnight, so I took the train to Boston, for I’d lost the boat — she’d ’a ben cheaper. Have you got a piece of squash pie in the house? I’m hungry. I’m glad to get home.”

The fisherman paused with a final air, and if left to himself it is doubtful if he would have added another word to his story from that day to this. Men of the sea are not so fond as traditionally believed of detailing their thrilling escapes. They suffer too much, and it is comfortable to forget.

“Well — yes,” reluctantly, “I said my dory-mate was froze. I did n’t say who he was. I’ve no objections, as I know of; only I hate to think of him. Job Ely was my dory-mate. Yes. We was together to see our trawls, and we drifted off in the fog — you could ’a cut it with a dull bread-knife! —



and we could n't find our way back to the Abby E. Salt; and that's all. I hate to think on't, because he died first.

"There was a bite of ship-bread and water we had aboard the dory agin accident—I like to have something—so they kep' me. But it was almighty cold. Don't you remember the spell o' weather come along about Thanksgiving? Well, Job Ely froze. He froze to death. So I had to do the rowin'. But I kep' him, for I reckoned his mother'd like to hev the body. I thought I'd make shore along some o' them desarted beaches. So I kep' him, but I covered his face, and I could n't make shore, and it was God A'mighty cold. I rowed for six days—nigh to seven. I like to died—Nelly Jane, don't take on so! Don't, my girl! Set in my lap awhile—never mind the children. Why, how you do shake and tremble! Why, look a-here! I DID N'T DO IT. I'm a livin' man. I've got you in these here arms. Bless the girl! Emma Eliza, what ails your marm? Has she took on this way all this while—for *me*? How peaked she looks and pale and saller—kind o' starved! There, Nelly Jane! Give me a mite o' suthin' for her, can't you? She dooz look starved. *Don't want nothin' but a kiss?* Here's twenty of 'em! Who ever heard of a woman bein' starved for kisses? Why, what a girl you be! Why, this is like courtin'—old married folk like us. Why, sho! I don't know but it's *wuth* a man's dyin' and comin' to life to court his own widder—this way.

"Well, yes, I did get pretty cold. Fact is, I froze my hands—froze 'em stiff. Fort'nate they friz to

the oars, so I kep' a-rowin'. Time agin I give out, and like to lay down alongside poor Job and give it up; but then they was friz to the oars, so I *had* to keep a rowin'. Cur'ous thing, now. One night, that last night before I sighted the Rose of the West, I was nigh about gone. You can't think how sick I was o' the sight o' Job — he looked so. But I could n't bear to heave him over. Well, that night — I tell you the Sunday mornin' truth — I heerd Rafè singin' and Emma Eliza playin' to him on the instrument, and I heerd Rafè sing : —

“ ‘Pull for the shore, fa—ther.’ ”

I heerd him plain as judgment, with the girl j'inin' in the chorus. But I heerd Rafè quite plain and loud, —

“ ‘Pull for the shore, fa—ther, *pull* for the shore!’ ”

Cur'ous, wa'n't it? *How 'd that hymn-tune know her chart*, navigatin' all them waters after me? Say? I heerd her. She need n't tell me. I heerd my little son singin' to his father — me 's good as a dead man — and by the livin' God I up an' *pulled*!

“ What did you say, Rafè? I don't know. My hands was froze. Can't say what I can do for a livin' with 'em till I've tried. Have to stay ashore, maybe. I hain't got so far as that. I don't mind my *hands*, so 's I've got my folks.

“ What did I holler back the night I went away? I don' know 's I know. You mean the night me and your marm had words? I had n't oughter had 'em. I thought on 't a sight. I hoped she'd forget 'em. I kinder thought she would. ‘*So be I*’? I don't remember sayin' ‘*So be I*.’ I misremember,

Rafè. Guess it must 'a' ben—yes, yes—sure enough. Sho! Yes, yes. I was a-callin' to poor Job—him ahead of me, for I was late—I says, 'Job Ely! *Job Ely!*' says I."

"I never says I knew you says so, fa—ther. I says, I think, I believe, he said, 'So be I.' I *wanted* to say I knew you says so, fa—ther."

"I'd oughter, Rafè. But I'm afraid I did n't."

"Fa—ther, did you hear me say"—But Rafè stopped. He could not ask his father, "Did you hear me say, 'Marm says she's sorry'?" The fine instinct of the fisherman's child was equal to that emergency. Rafè did not ask the question, and never will.

"Fa—ther," once again. Rafè came up and leaned against the big wooden rocking-chair wherein the two sat "courting,"—the massive, puzzled, tender man, the little woman, laughing and crying in her widow's dress. "Fa—ther, what did you *think* about, when you thought you'd be froze and drowned—all that time?"

"My son," said Henry Salt, after a long silence, which nobody, not even the baby, or the other baby, seemed to care or dare to break—"my son, *I thought about your poor mother.* I see that latch wants a screw," added the fisherman, in his leisurely, matter-of-fact voice. "I guess I'll fix it after you've warmed the pie up, Ellen Jane."

But Emma Eliza, whether from such excess of earthly blessedness as to lead her to fear that one's heavenly prospects might be slighted, or whether from some vague sense of saying her prayers, or whether solely out of respect for the instrument,

will never be known, danced madly to that melodious member of the family, and wailed out the general ecstasy in the lugubrious strains of "The Sweet By-and-by."

"But I never *thought* of its being *you*."

Helen Ritter, confronted in the entry of the big empty summer hotel by that timely artist whose need of models had made Rafè the proud support of a fatherless family, dashed out these words too impetuously to be recalled.

"*You!* and *here* again!" She was dazzling with snow and color. She would have drawn herself to her full height splendidly, but his was higher. In that gloomy place, by the light of the lonely and smoky kerosene lamp swinging from the cold ceiling, it seemed indeed as if he outvied her in splendor. As she looked up, it was as if his mere physical presence would break her heart and grind it to powder — it was so long since she had seen him.

Their eyes clashed, retreated, advanced, united, and held gloriously. They defied each other, they adored each other, taunted and blessed, challenged and yielded, blamed and forgave, wounded and worshiped, as only a few men and women may in all the world, and love the better for it. The story of years was told without a word; the secret of anguish was said in silence; the torrent of joy poured past dumb lips, and there by the winter sea, on a Christmas Eve, in the dismal hotel entry, by the light of the smoky kerosene, two souls, without speech or language, met, perhaps for the first time in all their lives.

"I saw you through the window over there," he stammered rapturously. "Oh, I saw you holding the woman in your arms, and the child came up and kissed you. Why, I heard you sob. I was mean enough to listen. And I said, 'Why, *she's a tender woman*. She never could have meant — She would forgive.' We misunderstood each other somehow, Helen. For Love's sake give me the right to find out how."

"Oh," said Helen Ritter, lifting her arms with a gentle and beautiful motion that might well have set a calmer man beside himself, "she told me I had never quarreled with the — man I — loved."

When they moved to shut the hotel door — for the snow was drifting in — and so stood for a moment between the storm without and the shelter within, Rafè and Emma Eliza at the instrument were singing shrilly, —

"Give the wind time  
To blow the man home!"

It seemed that Henry Salt had picked up another verse to this long-suffering song upon the voyage, for, past the bowlders, over the thickets, under the willows, through the snow, borne, not drowned, by the pæan of the organ of the sea, thus roundly on the gale his bass trolled forth: —

"Give your life time  
To blow the heart home!"

"I want to sing it too," said Helen Ritter. He to whom her lightest wish was dearest law drew

her furs about her, and led her out into the storm ; where, standing hand in hand, unseen, unheard, they joined their voices to the fisher-people's, and sang the wise, sweet words.



## A BRAVE DEED.

### I.

I AM a trouble man. That's what they call it in my business.

But first let me tell you. I ought to go back and begin at the beginning. I ain't used to telling things — only yarns to the boys. But I never set down by the job, before, and made head 'n' tail of what happens to folks — me nor other folks. You 'll excuse me, ma'am, if I don't get my hand in. I 'm a greeny at it. If you had n't asked me to tell you, I would n't ha' thought of it. When my wife says to me: "She wants you to go and set in her setting-room, of an evening, and tell her all about it," I was struck of a heap. But I could n't back out after I 'd got my foot in. So here I be. I 'll tell you. I 'll tell you best way I know how. I don't know 's I care much about your tellin' other folks; but I 'm not against it. I have n't only one thing I 'd like to stipperlate about that. Bamboozle 'em with the given name. That's all. I 'd rather you would n't use my given name. I ain't partikkeler on any other point as I know of. I 'll leave the rest to you. I 'm willin', if you are.

My name is Charles S. — call it Scattergood if you like; Charles S. Scattergood. That's as good as any, for bamboozling purposes. I knew a man once

named Scattergood. He was in hogs, out to Chicago — packed pork ; he come to a violent end from mistakin' of a bottle of solfurious acid for a hot scotch : that 's the way I come to remember the name.

I am a lineman in the Atlantic and Pacific Telephone Company. I've been on the force six years. It ain't an easy life. Any lineman will tell you. Ask 'em. But I haven't come to that yet. That is n't the beginning. The beginning is — No ; let me think.

You see there was — a girl. The beginning was about a girl. I don't know but that 's the beginning of bother anyhow you fix it ; seems so, don't it ? I can't say. I don't know much about 'em, only this one I speak about. She was my girl. The boys called her my best girl, but they had n't ought to. I had n't any second-best, nor any other girl but just this girl. I ain't that sort. I never took to women-folks that way. I was kind of shy with 'em. I never cared about any girl but this. We'd been keepin' company quite a while. I think it was as much as a year. We warn't promised, but I never thought of anybody else, ma'am. I 'm that kind. There warn't anything in the way but to wait till she felt like it, herself. She knew that. She warn't in a hurry to be married. I did n't want to skeer her. I did n't say much to her, only to try to please her. I liked her. I never liked anybody so much in all my life. I could n't help it.

Her name was Annie. Call it Annie — well, call it Annie Hope. That 's a pleasant-sounding name, I think. Hers was pleasant, too. I used to say it over a good deal to myself, while I was to work. I used

to think it kept me from getting giddy sometimes on top of extry high poles and crossing roofs, and when it was slippery, and in doin' of dangerous jobs, hundreds of feet above safer men that earned their livin' on the sidewalk. It steadied my head. I said it over, as if you was to say, "Annie — Annie Hope," while I was tracing trouble or doing any dizzy thing.

You want to know what is tracing trouble? I'll tell you presently. I'll explain myself as I go along, but I've got to go my own ways. I'm like a mud-turtle — he'll get there, give him time enough; but he'll double and hedge and go like he was molly-coddled out of his points of compass, all the way. I'm sort of slow in my disposition and set. I never could be hurried.

There's another one I've got to get in first. I want to be quit of explaining how he got here. I want to clear my mind of Charley Scattergood before I go ahead. *He* was n't a turtle; there was n't anything slow about *him*; he was different from me: he'd do what he d— what he pleased, anyhow you fixed it, quicker 'n a fellow of my sort could find out he meant to do it. He was more like a tarrier, Charley was. You can understand, ma'am, that there was a difference between us just from that point of the way we was called. We had the same name, you see — happened to. It does happen, but it ain't so likely with the name of — Scattergood. But there we was on the same force, doing the same jobs, answering to the same orders, and round among the same folks, so they told us apart like twins, that way. Charles S. Scattergood, that's me, always.

But *him* they called Charley. Nobody ever called me Charley. It did n't come natural. Charles S., that was me; and Charley, that was him. Folks knew us apart as well as if we'd been Moses and Yankee Doodle. He had curly hair for one thing, and I've noticed when a fellow by the name of Charles has curly hair folks call him Charley. He was a very good-looking fellow. He was better looking than I be. And he had a way about him, a rollicking sort of way, for he'd been a sailor; a good many of our business have. It comes 'em in good stead, I tell you, spurring up a rotten pole after a sleet-storm. The girls all took to Charley Scattergood.

Now, there's one thing I never could see the sense of, and that's a drunken lineman. I say: Suppose you're on the roof of a seven-story building shaking out a cross? I don't drink. It ain't sense. But Charley, he had his sprees; nothin' never harmed him, either. I've seen him so far under he could n't walk straight to dinner, and he'd crawl out onto the eaves to untie a twist or fasten guys or any of those jobs, and not so much as topple. It was his luck. The boys always said Charley Scattergood had luck. Some said it was because he was such a handsome fellow. But some said it was drink-luck.

Now, ma'am, his making up to my girl — that comes next. I've got to tell you about that, or you would n't understand the story. When first I see him makin' up to her, I says, "That's Charley Scattergood's luck." But I did n't believe he'd get her, someways. I could n't. She'd kept company with *me*. I thought it was one of her little ways — for she was full of 'em; she was n't like me; she had

the mischief in her, Annie had ; she was always up to something ; and she liked a new man to find out what a pretty girl she was — there most generally was one. I was used to it. I put up with it, for she kept company with *me*. She always made a difference between me and them. And I says to myself : “ She is so pretty ! She ’d ought to have her little ways. I ’m different from she is. I ’m slow and set. And then I ain’t a handsome fellow. I must be patient with Annie.”

I was pretty patient, take it all, I guess, for I never riled her, nor upset her mind by jealousy and nagged her. I says to myself : “ She don’t love you hard enough, Charles S. Scattergood, for you to have her. Wait. Be patient with her. She ’s so pretty ! Let her have her ways out, and you keep still. You just wait. Don’t you bother Annie.”

I ’d like to tell you what she looked like them days, if I knew how. She was n’t like the other girls. She had lots of pluck. She had a queer little way with her — a sort of mannish way. She was n’t mannish, not a bit. I don’t like that kind. It was only a sort of trick of hers, like children’s tricks when they play at being something. It kind of tickled her to play at it, I thought. She cut her hair short, but it was curly hair, of a yellow color, very light ; and it wrinkled all over her head like a little girl’s — she could n’t look like a fellow to save her. Some of ’em can. I don’t like that sort. Annie never could. She wore a little linen collar sometimes, choking up her pretty throat with a stiff necktie, but her throat was so soft it made you laugh to see it. Then she had a notion, one time, of running her

hands into her sack pockets ; and she 'd put her arm over a sofy — that way. But you 'd have laughed — it was so round ; she could n't square off at the elbow, to save her. She had a dimple, too — I liked that. And she had the biggest eyes you ever see ; blue eyes. She was always laughing, Annie was. And when I saw her put on those little ways, those man's ways, I tell you of, I did n't scold her. Mebbe I 'd ought to ; but I could n't, for it amused me. I used to think of when I played house up-country, when I was a little shaver, with some other young one, and if she was a girl young one maybe she 'd say : " We 'll take turns. I 'll play husband this time ; " — as if Annie was up to some such game. There was n't much man in my girl. No.

Nor she was n't that way so much to *me*, I 'd have you understand. I see it more with other folks. She was different with me. That was what I liked about it. She 'd treat them other men as if she was another fellow. But she kept company with *me*. She kept company with me like she was a girl.

Now the time I speak of was this time. It was in winter, come January, two years ago. It had been a very cold winter, if you remember. It was n't a lineman's winter, you better believe. It come hard on us. But it come toughest on the trouble men. I 'll tell you about that when I get to it. We 'd had a great deal of snow and blow. There 'd been a power of sleet. They 'd kept me pretty busy.

Maybe it was along of being busier than usual and of not seeing her quite so regular that Annie and him made up so far. I thought so afterwards. Girls like bein' remembered of. Lord knows I never for-



got her — used to wish I could. But there's one thing I've noticed about girls. They want to be told things — they're that way. There's another thing: seems as if their minds was insulated on the subject of business; they don't make connections on it. Seems as if they thought a man could earn his bread and butter makin' love. If it come this way, so's I was on duty and he was off, he'd run over there. Then he boarded pretty nigh her. She lived in East Boston. I lived in Russell Street, myself, with my married sister. She's a widder lady, and my board helped her along. He had chances against me of running in by spells. Come to think of it afterwards, I guess he made the most of 'em.

Now this time I tell you of I was going to take her to the theaytre. She was very fond of the theaytre, and I'd said we'd go first evening I could fix it. So it was to be of a Wednesday or a Saturday, and if I could n't let her know — her being in East Boston — I was to do the best I could, her being ready to go one of them two nights quite agreeable, and me to call for her. So of a Wednesday I could n't go, for my chief, he sent me out tracing trouble under Charles River bridge, for a wire was down from the ice that bothered us considerably, and I was to work late and drenched through, — and it was tarnation cold, — and when I got home to Russell Street and got my supper and into dry close, and decent to show myself to her, it was going on to nine o'clock, so I had to put it off. So it come Saturday night, and I got ready early, for it was a mild night and pleasant, and I was in a hurry, and I hurried over to East Boston, and I felt happy, the way a man

does when he's going to his girl, for I had n't seen her since Monday, and it seemed to me as if it was a good while.

So when I got there to her father's house — for her father is a stone-cutter in Digger and Downs's marble-yard, and he does a steady business, and brought her up most partikkeler, and sent her through the grammar school and talked about the high, and I've nothin against him only for marrying of a step-mother that Annie didn't like, I don't know's I ever blamed her, for she had the neurology done up in flannel bandages of a gray color like to make you wish she was n't there — when I got to her father's house this night I tell you, to take my girl to the theaytre — ma'am, she would n't go with me.

"I'm obliged to you," she says, "but I ain't a-going. I don't feel like it."

"But I've got the tickets," says I, for she'd never spoke like that to me before. "It's the play you said — it's the 'Pearl of the Necktie Factory.'" For she had a shine to see the "Pearl of the Necktie Factory;" it had run a hundred nights; she'd talked about it a sight, and so I'd got the tickets. I give a dollar for them two tickets.

"Why, what's the matter, Annie?" says I, for she did n't say much to me. "What ails you, dear?"

She was setting on the sofa in her father's setting-room, for her step-mother was scolding of the baby in the front chamber, and we was by ourselves.

So she turned her pretty head and looked at me, and then she looks away. Seems as if she did and did n't. Seems as if she would and would n't. Seems

as if she should and should n't — the way a woman does.

"You did n't come a Wednesday," so she says to me.

"I could n't come on Wednesday," says I to her. "I done my best. You'd ought to know it. I was clearing trouble under Charles River bridge. I done the best I could."

"Well," she says, "*I went o' Wednesday*. I've *seen* the play. I've seen the 'Pearl of the Necktie Factory,' and I don't know 's I care to see it again," she says. "You could have come if you'd tried hard," she says. "A smart fellow like you are (she did call me a smart fellow, don't you see?), he can do a thing if he set out to."

"There's one thing," says I very slow, for I was that cut, "there's one thing the smartest man can't do; he can't make a girl reasonable, if she won't be."

"If it's so bad as that," says she, "I would n't waste your vallyable time setting here. Maybe you can spend it better," says she, "and so can I, sir."

And up she gets and leaves the sofy, and off she goes upstairs.

"You'll be so polite as to excuse me," she says; "my step-mother desires me to scold the baby for her this evening, on account of her neurology having struck to her brains."

"You went to the theaytre with Charley Scattergood!" cries I; like that.

"I ain't that bound to you not to go with who I please," she says, "nor I won't be in a hurry neither."

Ma'am, they seem little things to get between a man and the girl he liked. Don't think they ever *did* seem so small as they do now I come to tell 'em. If it had been a big thing, I'd have known what to do with it — something like a runaway horse, or an avalanche, or a fellow I could have hit, or something like that. But it was n't nothing but that little thing — the way a girl's mind worked. I'm a big fellow, you see; but all my muscle was n't good for that! against that strange, small, pretty creature in the working of her mind. I could have carried her in these here arms from Boston to San Francisco; I could have climbed to the top of a seventy-five foot telegraph pole with her and held her there in a thunder-storm — but there I set like a baby on the sofy, beaten by the working of her mind.

I got my hat and left. There was n't nothing else to do. I got my hat and cleared out into the street, and there I walked and walked. I was raging mad. I was mortal hurt. I went from mad to hurt and back again from hurt to mad, like I should die for it. I'm a slow man in my temper, but when it's up, I take it out; same way with my feelin's — she'd *hurt* my feelin's. She never hurt me that way till that time. I did n't know she could. She had her little tantrums and little ways with me; but she never got my feelin's like they was that night.

Now, I'll tell you. Whilst I was walking up and down outside and raging to myself, I saw a man come up and ring her door-bell. He come quite sudden to my sight, for there was a street-light opposite her door, and he come flash! beneath it all to once. He was rigged up in all his Sunday close, and he had

blarsted curly hair, and he was a handsome fellow, and I did n't need no spiritooal mejum to tell me it was Charley Scattergood. Worse take him !

She come to the door herself. She did. She was n't taking care of no step-baby. She had her things on, and her little hat set sidewise on her short hair, and she wore a little green gown, she had, her Sunday gown with fixin's on it made of fur or feathers, and there she stands, for she seemed to be going somewheres, and I heard him say : —

"Hilloa, Nan !" — for he did, he called her Nan. But *I* had always called her Annie. She never put her hat on the side of her head for *me*. She never stood that way, with her hand against her — that silly little boyish way — with *me*. She'd been all girl to me. But she says : —

"Hilloa, Charley !" just as if she'd been another fellow : and she laughs and nods at him ; and for all it was so silly, she looked so pretty, and her dimple looked so, standing there, I could have killed him.

But, ma'am, when she come to shut the door, and he went in and I see him in the front entry against the entry light, I saw him reelin' in beside her ; and I said : "He's drunk."

Well. She did n't go anywhere with him, for I watched to see ; maybe she had the sense to make out his condition ; maybe her father would n't let her, — for I knew her father was to home and would look after her, — and so I come away.

I come away, and home I come acrost the ferry, and I looked up at the stars, for it was such a pleasant night, and I'd been so happy coming over — and I went from hurt to mad, and I went from mad

to mad, and then I went from mad to terror — lest he should get her after all. And I cursed him, for I could have killed him. I cursed him on that ferry, all the way. I seemed to say to him : —

“Charley Scattergood, you’ve got my girl. She ain’t your girl. She’s mine. You ain’t fit to have her. Let her be! I’ll fling you overboard. Let us be!”

For it seemed as if he was on deck beside me, and I felt about in the dark as if I’d got him. And I flung my arms across the railing as if it was I flung him over. And I looked down as if I see him going under. And I watched the paddle-wheel as if it dra-awed him in. But I cursed him, for I hated him.

I think I had a sort of fever in my brain, for I never wanted to kill a creature before in all my days. If it was a kitten or a yellow pup, or if it was an old hen, I did n’t like to do it. But, ma’am, I could have wrung his neck, or I could have stomped on him, or if I’d seen him under a locomotive injine I would n’t have cared. I hated Charley Scattergood. I wanted him to die. I went from mad to murder in my heart, upon the ferry-boat, so help me God.

Ma’am, where do you think them things come from, plumb! into a man’s soul? If he was a steady man and tried to do his dooty, and liked his fellow-creatures, and had gentle thoughts like other folks and never wished no harm to no man. Seems as if it *was* a brain fever — when you love a girl. Seems as if you *was* a mad man — if it is a girl. Seems as if it ain’t you that love her : it’s a devil or an angel loves her ; and he angels you or devils you, and there you be!



Well. He was n't on the ferry-boat. He was setting there beside of her in her father's setting-room. Drunk. And calling of her Nan.

So I did n't murder him, for it was n't handy ; and I went home, for my sister that was a widder lady made me some catnip tea and I give it to the cat, and so I went to bed, and went to sleep. But I give the theaytre tickets to a horse-car driver that I was acquainted with that had a girl that squinted. It seemed a pity to waste 'em.

Now that night there come a storm. It was a sleet-storm. I'll tell you about it. It sleeted like the Evil all that night, and come morning, if you was to look out, it was like looking on a world of ice that made you think of a creature frozen dead ; like it was the corpse of a world. It was the worst sleet-storm we had that winter, for I had a reason to remember.

I said I'd tell you what a trouble man is. He's one of them detailed to pick out trouble — that's the way the name come to be given to us. The telephone business is a mighty accidental business ; something happens all the time. First you know your lines won't work. Maybe you sent a message and it sticks somewheres. It's the trouble men that have to find out wheres. They keep us for that purpose. That's our job. It ain't an easy job. Wheresomever and howsomever that line's out of kilter, from Boston to California, that's our business to find out. Maybe it's broke by wind ; maybe it give way under the ice ; or it's beaten down by snow ; or it's struck by lightning ; or it's crossed somewheres by somebody else's accident, — some telegraph company's

had bad luck and tied you up; or it's got catched beneath a bridge, for we have to work under water as well as over air; and you would n't believe it of a telephone wire, how it can snarl if it sets out. There's nothing equals the snarling power of a telephone wire as I know of unless it's a woman with the neurology. Seems as if them wires were so many men-folks trying to crochet; they don't take the reg'lar stitch, but they use up a lot of yarn in making of the most extra-ordinary pattern. They're pretty stiff, and they slash about a good deal in wind and water.

Did you ever happen to think, ma'am, of a slippery winter morning, what it would be like if you was in our business? There's more business goes on over your heads these days than there is upon the ground below. I don't think folks *do* think much about it. There's a sight of pity goes to sailors and such-like and firemen and those, and I'm not denying they deserve it. But our business ain't so well understood in folks' mind to feel a sympathy for line-men. Sometimes seems to me we have a call for it, ourselves, for it ain't a very safe business. It ain't so much pluck—though it does take pluck—but *pluck* ain't anything to *complain* of.

Now, come a morning after such a storm as this I speak about. There's ice everywhere. Your steps are slippery. All the sidewalks are covered by ashes for peril of your bones. Horses go down in the street. The tops of the fences and the door-knobs and all sorts of little things are sleeted over. The trees have crusted up like they'd got into a bathing suit of ice from toe to top. The roof—well folks

don't think about roofs. *They* are all of a glare. That's the kind of weather folks stay indoors, if so be they can. Women huddle round the register and say: "I guess I won't go out to-day." Men go to their business in the horse-cars, and talk about how slippery it is. In the evening paper there's the accidental column — full of how such a one slipped on the pavement and how his leg was broken, or his back was hurt.

Way down below us whilst we are at work we see folks putting saw-dust on level places and holding on to something whilst they go by. They look kind of small as we look down, like creatures that grow on something. Maybe we're out on the eaves crawling along toward the eaves-trough to get a wire that got down acrost a water-spout; or maybe we're droppin' from one roof to t' other, or we're holding on to a chimney, or there's a pole to climb beyond 'em all — a roof-pole you must climb, and you put your spurs in and go up clinging to that pole, to guy a wire over or to untwist some trouble, and slippery — by gracious! Slippery don't tell it. It's all glared over — roof, pole, eaves, wires, pins and insulators, the skylights you go out of, the slates you crawl acrost, the fire-escape you hang onto — and you feel the ice melting underneath your fingers, for your hands get numb. Then the wind — Lord! how the wind blows from the nor'ard after a sleet-storm, on a seven-story roof!

That's the weather when a lineman has to work. Come a day when it ain't safe to put foot acrost your door-sill on the solid earth, that's the very day the linemen have to crawl like kids and cats hundreds of

feet above you in the air, balancing and holding of themselves for life's sake and the sake of your telephone message against they slip and go. If he was to make one misstep he'd be to pieces on the pavement before you could say: "There's a lineman!" There's no hope for you if once you slip. If you ain't a dead man, you're worse. Your back's broke or it's laid you up for life. Lucky for you if you knocked your brains out and done with. Your widder'll get on better than if she got a cripple to support, her and him and the children too.

Now this day I tell you of, this sleety day, I woke, for I was miserable in my mind, and I reported to headquarters for any orders for the day. It was a terrible slippery day. But I thought maybe it did n't matter, for I was so miserable along of Annie and him that had got my girl away from me. I hated him. I had hated him over night and I hated him come morning, and I hate — hate — hated him as I walked along, that way, as you'd march to music. My hate and me kept step because of him and Annie.

Now this is the way we do it. They send us out according to the job, and if there's four or five of us, we're what you call a crew. If there's a good many needed for any purpose, you'd say we were a force. But a trouble man he may go alone; he may be by himself, it might so happen to him to be mending trouble somewheres by himself. You might be a trouble man and you might see a lot of poles blown down, — for when one goes sometimes the rest go like as they were cards set up, — and you might go and notify the chief, and he'd send a force to mend the trouble, but you he might send maybe to some

point apart, to set some mischief right you'd set your eye on. Maybe you'd go to a pole to guy it over — that's to fasten it over to another pole — to keep it steady and to mend the break, and to stop the rest from going, and maybe you might be up to top of this pole by yourself alone, and it might be it was a high pole, don't you see? and there you are.

Now then, this day I speak of, I was ordered to the South End, for there'd been the havoc to pay up along there in the region of the city hospital, where those high poles are — we've got some *beautiful* poles at the South End. So my chief he sent me to pick out trouble way out towards Roxbury, for the wires were down along of the sleet-storm and we were pretty busy — and all at once, for I was going by, I see a horse-car driver stop his car and point his whip upwards over yonder behind me, and I turned and looked. And then I see folks staring and two or three they stopped, and we all looked up.

And then I see a sight I never saw before nor I don't know's I'd care to see it every January morning neither.

It was a very high pole. I knew that pole. I'd been up it, time again. It was an eighty-foot pole. It was all glared over with the ice, and it shook against the wind. The wires were down.

Up at the top of that there pole there was a man. I'd ought to say there *hung* a man, for quick as I set eyes on him I knew it was all up with that man. It was a trouble man gone up to guy the pole over, and he'd gone alone, for nobody was with him only the force to work to the north'ards, where the other poles had all gone down.

My heart come into my mouth when I saw that man, and my marrow froze within me, for when I looked, I saw him fling his arms — that way — and topple. When I saw him, for he fell for'ards on his face against the cross-arms of the poles, both arms about it, and kind of come together like a jack-knife — so — and there he hung, as helpless and as senseless as the buried dead, him eighty feet above the ground.

“He’s dead!” cries the horse-car driver. But the conductor said: —

“He’s drunk!”

“He’s in a faint!” cries somebody.

“He’s in a fit!” says some one.

“He’s got the cramp!” I heard a fellow say.

“He’s froze with the weather!” says a woman going by.

“God have mercy on him!” says they all.

“He’ll drop — he’ll drop in a minute” —

“There!” says they. “Oh, look at him.”

## II.

I made short work of it, pushing everybody by, for I ran, and it was slippery, and it took me longer than it would of a different day, but no man, unless it was a lineman, could have got there so quick for being practiced at it, and I ran and I looked up and when I looked up — ma’am, I went as cold as the ice beneath me, and then I turned from cold to hot and then I went from hot to horror, for the sight I saw.

Ma’am, it was him I saw — it was Charley Scattergood.



It was him atop of that there pole, hanging senseless eighty foot above my head, across the cross-arms. It was him I hate — hate — hated from my soul. It was him that sent me on from mad to murder when I thought of him. It was him I could have stomped on or see beneath an injine or flung over the ferry-boat and get beneath the paddle-wheel. It was him. It was him that took my girl away from me.

Now I'll have to explain to you. I'll have to explain to you about that guy. You could n't understand the nature of my feelings unless you understood the situation of that pole and guy.

You see it's this way. You've got a line of poles — there — see? And you've got another connection — there. Maybe you guy over to a roof or to another row — so.

And if your guy breaks, your poles might begin to go the way I told you, like a row of nine-pins from the storm. And they've all gone down, we'll say, like these had, five or six of 'em, in the gale, it blowed so, and this one, it's made a stand. This one stood its ground and there it is, all them broken wires dangling and groaning in the ice and wind, and a trouble man he's sent up to guy it over to this roof or to this other pole I tell you of, to make it fast and stop the rest from going. Maybe he guys it over to a stump — that's what we call a broken pole — and he has the wires to tie, and he has his strap-and-vice to join 'em with, and his pliers to twist 'em with, and his spurs upon his legs — and that's all he has except his pluck and the ice-storm.

So I see in a minute Charley Scattergood had been

up to guy that pole over, and I see it was n't done — it was n't guyed over — when he was taken with whatever took him; for I saw the pole shook consider'ble and that the wires hung flabby, and, ma'am, I saw another thing. I saw the pole was a cracked pole. They are sometimes.

Now it takes me a great while to tell you these here things because I ain't an educated man, but it did n't take me long enough to think 'em — not so long as if you was to say: "Charley Scattergood!" If I was an educated man I could explain to you the nature of my feelings. You've got learning yourself, and maybe you can understand 'em without I was to tell 'em — maybe that's what learning does for folks. I don't know.

But, ma'am, though they did n't take time they took my mortal life — the feelings that I had. It seemed as if I'd die of 'em before it all went through my mind:—

"That's him. That's Charley Scattergood. He took your girl away from you. He's a miserable drinkin' cuss. He'll drop. You ain't nothing to do with it.

"Those other linemen are too far off. He'll drop before they get here. Nor they would n't go up. I don't know a feller on that crew would go up. It's a cracked pole. . . . You did n't do it. It ain't *your* work. *You* did n't hang Charley Scattergood eighty foot above the ground, him senseless on a cross-arm. *You* ain't got to do nothing but let him be. It's God A'mighty's business."

Now when I got so far as God A'mighty, it did seem as if the feelings that I had would kill me. It

seemed like I'd die before he would. It seemed like I'd be tore in twenty. Seems as if the Last Trumpet and the Day of Judgment and the Great White Throne, and all them things we read about in the Good Book, you know, kind of got together in a crew and made a dead set at me. Seems as if they said : —

“Go up! Go up! Go up!”

Then it seems as if I answered : —

“Don't you do it! Stay where you be!”

And then it come : —

“Go up! Go up!”

And then I says : —

“It ain't my business. It's God A'mighty's.”

And then : —

“It ain't God A'mighty's. It's your business. Go up! Go up!”

And then it comes to me this way, crash! like a charge of electricity in a thunder-shower : —

*“As layin' between God A'mighty and Charles S. Scattergood, which is the lineman of them two? Him that is the lineman, it's his dooty to climb that pole.”*

Ma'am, we're taught to do our dooty in our business and obey our orders, and once it was clear to me in that minute — for all this only took no time at all to go through me — once it was plain to me I'd got my order and I'd got it from the Chief — from t' other Chief that sends a sleet-storm and blows a gale easy as ours would set in his office and send a message out acrost a wire — once I understood it was my dooty, I say no more about it. I set my spurs into that pole and I went up. . . .

A brave deed you say? Well. I don't know. It did n't strike me so. It was my dooty. That was all about it. I did n't think about it pertikkelerly. I'd got my orders.

So I went up, for it all took quick as I could think it. And I did the best I could. That's all. It was pretty slippery. Yes. And I knew the pole was n't sound. Yes. And he'd taken my girl away from me. Yes. But there was n't anything said about that in the order. So I went.

Now it's this way. You know what a cross-arm is. You've seen 'em on the telephone poles, and the telegraph. They run acrost the top and hold the oak pins and the insulators. Each cross-arm might have ten pins to screw the insulators on. There may be one or two, there may be six or more of these cross-arms. This pole it was a tall pole and in the thick of business — there might be maybe eighty to a hundred wires on such a pole — and it had eight cross-arms, and Charley Scattergood he hung acrost the highest of 'em all, the top one, doubled over — that way. I could n't help thinking as I went up how like a rag doll he looked hanging acrost a close-horse — for it was so high and he looked small.

I stuck my spurs in hard, for it was slippery as death, and from the excitement and from knowing that the pole was n't sound it seemed as if I could n't make a footing, and I thought of Annie, for I loved her, and I felt bad to think if so we both come crashing down, she'd feel worse to think it was Charley Scattergood than she would for thinking it was me.

But I said, for I felt a little giddy and it blew so, as I went up, I said: —

“Annie, Annie Hope,” just as I’ve always said to keep a steady head.

Heaven bless her dear name, ma’am, whether it steadied me as it always had, I don’t know as I can prove to you, not being an educated man — but I felt steadier for saying of it, and for feeling of the feeling that made me say it.

“Annie. Dear Annie. Annie Hope,” — for the loving feeling that I had to her, and it was like as if my love turned into nerve, ma’am, while I went up, and turned into firm muscles and into a cool brain and into all those things a lineman needs if he’s got a deed like that to do to save a fellow-creetur’s life, or maybe give his own. And it was like as if the love I had turned out the hate I had. And all my soul went up, as my body was going up that pole. It was as if I left my deadly feelings down below upon the ground, and I went from murder up to mercy as I climbed to-ward the sky upon the pole.

Now this is the holy truth. I’d never been so keen to hurt him as I was to save him before I got to him. I’d never wished him half such curses as I prayed Heaven I might do him blessin’s and get him down a living man. And I says to myself: —

“If we topple and go down together I won’t report at Headquarters for a murderer. Lord Chief A’mighty may He forgive me, but He sha’n’t catch me there!”

So it blew pretty hard, and I got up. And everything was covered with ice. And my spurs slipped. And my hands got pretty numb. But I got up. And I caught hold of him and I felt the pole quiver, and I held on to him and there he was.

He 'd had a fit. The feller 'd had a fit. And there he hung acrost the upper cross-arms with no more knowledge than the dead. And I looked at him. But I 'd left my hate eighty foot below us, and it was as if I liked him, for I wanted so to save him, and I looked to see what I could do, for he showed some signs of coming to.

So I says : —

“Charley Scattergood, for the love of God, don't you stir. Stay where you be till I tie you on.”

Now I had my pliers with me in my belt in the sort of pocket where we carry 'em, and I see the broken wires, hanging round, and I remembered that I had some wire with me, a roll I 'd had to do some guying with. So I took that wire, for it was strongest, and I twisted it around him, and I fastened him tight with my pliers, and I twisted the other wires around him, and I tied him tight, and then I looked to see what next.

I wanted to guy that pole over, for it might have saved us, and I tried, but do my best I could n't do it, him being in my way, and the pole so shaky, and I see I could n't, and then I drawed my breath and looked below.

I don't think it had come over me till that minute what a fix it was. But when I looked down I saw the people, for they 'd come from everywheres, and there was quite a crowd, and I saw the linemen that had run up from the nearest crew, and I see they were all discussing of my situation. And they tried to advise me this and that, for I could see 'em holler, but the wind blew so I could n't make out a word. And all at once it come to me : —



“How in God’s name are you going to get him down?”

“Anybody got a rope?” cried I.

But nobody could hear me, and I tried again.

“Anybody happen to have any more wire about him?”

And one of the trouble men he understood me, and he sort of beckoned to me, and held up both arms, and I see he had a coil of wire and a coil of rope betwixt his two hands, and I see there was n’t any other way, and so I went down the pole. I went some fifty foot or so, for it was slow work, and I looked every minute to come dashing down. So some of ’em climbed on something, a cart or something, and got one on t’ other’s shoulders, for no man dared to add an ounce weight extry to that splitting pole with us two on it — and they flung me up the wire and the ropes, and so I caught ’em and took ’em, and climbed up again.

Yes. I went aloft again. I did n’t see no other way. I could n’t leave him there, you see. Plucky? — I don’t know. It was my dooty. I tried to do it. That’s all there was to it. It is n’t much to tell of, come to tell it.

So I went up and I untied him, and I got the rope about him, and I plied the wire to it, till I had the length to risk it — but the wind blew pretty hard, and Lord! how that pole did begin to shake.

Well, he come to a little, not so ’s to help himself, but enough so ’s not to hender me, and I said: —

“Charley, you’re took with something, and I’ve got to swing you down, for the pole’s rotten. If you vally your life — or mine either — don’t you darst to do nothing, but do as I tell you.” For I knew if .

he was to wrastle or even to wriggle, it would be all up with both of us.

So I think he sensed it, for he seemed to, and I made him fast, and I began to lower of him down ahead of me, me descending above him best I could, and he hung quite still, and behaved extra-ordinarily well, for a fitty man. My idea was, if I found we was going, I'd play out the whole of the cable fast, and some of 'em would catch him before the pole went down.

Well, I did it. I don't know's I know exactly how. But I got the feller down. I got him down as far as thirty foot or so above the ground, when all at once I felt it coming.

That there pole begun to swing this way and that way, — the way a tree will when it's going to fall — this way and t' other way, — and I knew it was coming — and I'cries out: —

"There he goes! I can't do nothing more for him! Catch him some of ye!" and I played his rope out, and I let him go, and he come down gentle as a sick man that had a little fall upon the floor — and then I heard the *s-s-crash!* go through the grain of that pine pole — and jumped for my life, and me and it come down together.

It don't seem much to tell, now, does it? That's all there is of it. It makes me kind of ashamed to tell it — as if there was something to tell.

Why, yes — if you want to know what happened to *me* — next thing I knew I did n't know anything, by gracious. I come crashing on my head, folks said, and they picked me up, and says: —

"He's dead."

But Charley Scattergood, a policeman took him to the hospital ; and when he got well he give up being a Boston lineman, and he went to — No, ma'am, I'm not wishing to be profane in a lady's house. He went to New York city.

So next I knew I opened my eyes one day and I see my sister that was the widder lady coming in the door. And she says : —

"Mercy, Charles, you've come to, hain't you?" And I saw I was to home, and I felt quite smart only for the bandage on my head and for being as weak as a drownded puppy beneath the bed-close. And my sister says : —

"There's a young lady in the setting-room, come to inquire after your health," she says. "She's got a green dress trimmed with feather trimming," says my sister.

"Tell her I'm much obliged to her," says I, "and that I take it for an honor."

So my sister goes and tells her, and in she comes again.

"The young lady's crying," says my sister.

"Dear, dear," says I.

"And she says to ask you if you're willing for to see her a minute, me setting in the room beside of her," my sister says.

And I says : —

"For a minute or forever — she knows that will-ing ain't the word," says I.

So back my sister goes, and in they come, her and Annie close behind her. And my sister says : —

"This is the young lady."

And I says : —

"I'd a ben shaved if I'd known you was coming, my dear."

And my sister says : —

"I'll go and see the barber about it this minute. I'll have him come over after dinner, if the young lady will excuse me half a second."

I took it very kind of my sister, for Annie could n't speak, she cried so — she could n't speak a word. And when we was alone together, I looked up, for I felt pretty weak, and I could have cried myself to see my dear girl how she looked, for she was pale and miserable to see.

"I hain't slept day nor night since I heard of it," sobs she. "I like to died myself," says she.

And I says : —

"Why, Annie !"

"Oh, *don't!*" says she.

And I says : —

"Crying for *me*, Annie ? — Crying so for *me* ?"

"Oh, dear," she says. "Oh, dear, dear, dear ! I'm ashamed of myself," she says.

"I never called upon a gentleman before," she says, "but if I did n't know you would forgive me I should *die!*" she says. "I hope you won't think the worse of me for coming. I ain't a forward girl," she says.

So I held out my hand to her, for I could n't answer her. I could n't someways. I took it so, that she could cry like that for me. And she put hers into it as if it had been a little bird she gave me, and she stopped crying, and she says : —

"I never thought you'd make me *ask* you !"

And I says : —

"What in God's name do you mean, my dear? For I ain't very strong. Don't make game of me."

And she lifted up her pretty face that was *all girl* to me — her dear face that had the dimple on it, and the tears —

And it seemed as if she did and did n't; it seemed as if she would and would n't; it seemed as if she should and should n't — the way a woman does. But she said: —

"If you 'll *have* me, I 'll marry you to-morrow."

"Don't fool me, dear," I said. And she said: —

"No, I won't fool you. I won't marry you to-morrow. I 'll marry you to-day, so's I can take care of you and not lose a minute, and nobody to hinder."

And Heaven bless her — so she did.

· · · · ·  
Come now! I see just what you're thinking in your mind. I see it very plain. Did n't she prove half plague, half comfort — half lovin', half teasin' — half flirtin', half coaxin' — that kind?

Ma'am, you are mistaken. Since my girl become my wife, she's been *all wife* to me.

## THE SACRIFICE OF ANTIGONE.

PROFESSOR KOSMOS, ex-professor of classic and modern Greek at the leading university of the country, hurried into the restaurant and sat down at his usual table. Professor Kosmos was probably the only man in the land who had been forced to abandon a professorship for a property. His inheritance was large and unexpected; and the cutting of coupons and the pursuance of an unsalaried Greek enthusiasm now occupied his life. His long-looked-for volume on "Diogenes in His Tub" was in press for the fall market. The Professor was now at leisure to concentrate his whole nature upon the revival of ancient Greek oratory in Yankee schools.

Thurston's restaurant was well known about town. There lunched the busy brokers and capitalists of the city; and there the literary millionaire, being a phenomenon, was well known.

The Professor glanced over the bill of fare with a dissatisfied expression, as he balanced his book against the sugar-bowl. The Professor always carried a book (and Greek at that). Nothing suited his scholarly taste that noon.

With an Athenian sigh he called for olives — and the waitress added crackers on her own responsibility. She had waited on the Professor before.

If the Professor had possessed the human rather



than the Hellenic temperament he would have studied that waitress sympathetically long before now. As it was he liked her unconsciously. She was so modest, she was so quiet — in short, she was so unlike the usual young lady who banged (in every sense) her way to a man's palate, that not to feel her presence pleasantly was impossible.

Now the thing which the customer had not noticed until to-day was the pallor of the waitress; the pallor of poverty and hardship, — a color startling, as the girl stood in the strong light balancing on her slender hands a heavy trayful of roast and salad china from the next table, where four men had just expensively dined.

"Come here!" The Professor beckoned; he did not like to snap his fingers at this girl; he did not like to call her Polly or Molly — in fact, he did not know her name. The girl answered his summons quickly and quietly.

"You look ready to drop," said the Professor, in a savage undertone.

"I *am* — a little — faint," said the girl; "but it is n't any matter; I often am."

"That waiter is heavy enough for an Irishman!" growled the Professor. "You're not Irish, are you?" he proceeded, with the want of tact not uncommon with scholars.

"No, sir."

The girl dropped her eyes and flushed brightly; but a twitch of amusement tugged at the corners of her sad and delicate mouth.

"Give *me* that thing — all those dishes — food enough for Xenophon's army. There!"

Before the astonished waitress could protest, the big Professor had seized the heavy tray and stalked across the dining-room with it; his waving black beard blew in the draught from the dumb waiter, as he deposited his burden haughtily, and returned with long, lean strides to his own table, as unconscious that the eyes of all Thurston's were upon him as Xenophon himself.

"It's too heavy for you," he said shortly. "Now get me a cup of that tea I like, and my slice of lemon, please."

The girl, scarlet and distressed, flew to obey his order. When she returned, with the steaming, fragrant Pekoe, and had put in his two lumps with the little plated sugar-tongs which trembled in her shaking fingers, she said, in a low voice: "Professor Kosmos?" The Professor laid down his book in which he had been absorbed during the tea interval. "I thank you, sir. It was kind in you; but don't — *don't* do that again."

"And pray why not, my child?"

"It might make the other girls angry, sir — and — and — it might cost me my place. I — I've *got* to keep the place, sir; I've got to live!"

Something in the girl's tone made the scholar lift his head, and look at the little waitress long and searchingly. She was as pale as thin porcelain; the light seemed to strike through her; veins stood out on her delicate temples and thin hands; her large, dark eyes appealed to him like a dumb animal's; they were set deep in a high, full brow, back from which her hair was brushed severely without fuss or friz. "Why, here is a forehead," thought the Pro-

fessor. He had never really looked at it before. She was very plainly and poorly dressed in a blue calico and white apron, and she wore no ornament of any kind, not even a flounce or a frill.

"There, there!" muttered the Professor, kindly. He did not know what else to say. He shoved back his chair and took his hat and bowed to the waitress, with respect.

Now the Professor did what he had never done before — forgot his book. The title of the book was in full sight: 'Αντίγονη.

"Oh, you have forgotten your 'Antigone,' sir," said the waitress impulsively. She took the book with a certain tenderness, and handed it to him with a touch expressing both the familiarity and the carefulness of a reader.

Now, indeed, Professor Kosmos stared at his waitress. The last one he had at Thurston's slapped his famous English translation into the gravy one day, and then called it "Anti-gōne."

When the Professor came to Thurston's, a few days after, for his next luncheon, a fat, greasy girl, with bangs and a red jersey, knocked his spectacles off with the bill of fare, and peremptorily demanded his order.

His little waitress was gone. In surprise and real distress he consulted the proprietor.

"We don't keep girls that can't carry their own trays," said that gentleman shortly.

"But it was no fault of the *girl's*," urged the customer. "I did it, and you'll oblige me, Mr. Thurston, by taking her back."

The proprietor was not unaware of the celebrated

Greek reputation that dined off his olives and cheese; and he replied more suavely: "Why, certainly, to oblige you, Professor, if I can find her; but these girls drop out of sight like a stone in a well. We don't take their address."

The Professor sighed. He felt unaccountably sorry. He had blundered so kindly. He went over to the rival restaurant across the street, and lunched abstractedly on cold corned beef.

A few nights after, a reluctant knock rapped at the door of the Professor's eccentrically plain bachelor lodgings. It was the hour for his washerwoman, and he bawled, "Come in," without lifting his eyes from his copy of "Agamemnon at the Club," learnedly proved by him not to have been written by Homer.

A slight figure in a waterproof cloak, and wearing a thick veil across a bowed face, timidly entered the study, and a low voice said, "Here are your clothes, sir; where shall I find the soiled ones, if you please?"

The Professor whirled in his revolving study-chair.

"Where in — Sparta — is Mrs. O'Hooligan? *She* does my washing."

"She is ill, sir. I've taken her work," replied the stranger quickly.

The Professor pointed over his shoulder in embarrassed silence. He was not used to veiled laundresses — and young ones too. Mrs. O'Hooligan was big and sixty, and usually wore a red woolen "cloud" falling off her back comb. Her silent substitute went to the closet where the linen lay tossed

about in classic and masculine disorder, filled the clothes bag, and got herself out of the room as soon as possible. She was hurrying away without her money. The Professor called her back and handed her a two dollar bill. "Never mind the change," he said gruffly.

"I prefer to return it, sir," answered the laundress, in a scarcely audible voice. "I will do so next week. I — have n't it with me to-night."

What was it about that voice? No tone of such refinement had ever objected to keeping change in those apartments before. No such syntax had ever before graced the subject of his soiled linen. Was it a familiar accent? But that was impossible.

It was half-past seven o'clock in the evening, when Mrs. Goodwin De Witt swept through her drawing-rooms on her final tour of rigorous inspection before the Junior Party. Mrs. Goodwin De Witt was one of the most distinguished hostesses of one of the most hospitable cities in the land.

Celebrated men and women met every week in her beautiful house. All the literary, artistic, and theological stars of the University Town were at home in her *salon*. She was a woman of two worlds, this and the one to come. Her sympathies were as wide as her true culture. She was President of the Students' Aid Association and of who knew how many charities? but she never had prettier flowers, or a more attractive dining-room, or invited more celebrities than when she gave her annual reception to the Junior class of the college which admitted women. Nothing was too good for these young

people who were not invited to elegant homes any too often, and who had just begun the long struggle for a foothold in the wonderful world which she had conquered, and which had crowned her one of its sweetest queens.

As Mrs. Goodwin De Witt stood deftly shaking a long lace portière into graceful shape, her attention was arrested by the sudden sight of an early guest, a student clearly. Who else would come sharp on the stroke of the hour? And ah! who else would dress—if the truth were said—like that? A slight figure, frail to transparency, bent a little with embarrassment, parted the lace with a thin hand.

“I see I’ve come too early,” faltered the young guest, with a frankness which attracted the woman of society at the first sound. “I don’t know any of the girls *very* well. I am pretty busy. I had my lessons till the last minute, and I thought perhaps you’d *expect* us to be prompt; for we’re only girls—and boys.”

She advanced, holding out her hand, smiling the easy smile of a girl who was not quite as verdant as her early arrival might seem to indicate. She stood in the splendid room, a quaint little figure in an old black alpaca dress, with linen collar and cuffs,—these were beautifully laundered; an old-fashioned brooch, of hair and gold, fastened her collar; her hair was brushed back from a high forehead.

“It gives me the more chance to get acquainted with you,” welcomed the hostess heartily; “and that gives me pleasure, Miss—?”

“Dreed. Dorothy Dreed is my name.”

Mrs. Goodwin De Witt and Dorothy Dreed sat



down on a blue satin *tête-à-tête*, and in five minutes were fast friends. In ten the older woman knew the younger one's whole story — or thought she did. If she only had, our tale would have found a gayer ending. Dorothy was so gentle, she was so well-mannered, she was so affectionate, she was so frank — how could the experienced hostess know that the proud-hearted little creature held her at bay, and told her all she chose, and not a word beyond, of her struggling history?

A Junior in college? Yes. Competing for the Greek prize? Trying to — hoping to. It was like Professor Kosmos to offer so large a sum — how large? Mrs. De Witt forgot. Two hundred dollars. A very large sum, Dorothy Dreed said. And she thought it quite like Professor Kosmos; he was such an enthusiast in Greek. Mrs. De Witt hesitated. Was her guest quite well? She had a frail look. Quite well, Dorothy said. Did she live with friends? No; she boarded. Were her parents living? Her father was — and her step-mother.

There were boys; brothers. The boys had been put through college somehow, all but one, her little brother Teddy. Nobody expected a *girl* to go.

"So I came away on my own account, and put myself through. I entered Freshman year," smiled Dorothy.

"I — came — without kid gloves," added the poor child pathetically, looking down at her bare hands; redder and rougher than most of the girls' hands were; little delicate hands put through some rude work foreign to their inheritance and training. She felt that Mrs. De Witt would understand that she could not afford gloves.

The black alpaca nestled confidently against the lace and velvet draperies of a hostess with eyes full of tears that fell — or one did — upon the blue satin cushions where the two sat talking.

“Here is another case,” thought Mrs. De Witt; her warm heart was overburdened with “cases” all the time.

“Here is a case for the Aid Society. I must look her up as soon as I can.”

But how was even Mrs. De Witt, woman of the world, protector of poor students, searcher of girls’ hearts, to know that this “case” was the most desperate in the whole college that she and a handful of good women tried to “mother” with limited funds and unlimited sympathies? How was she to know — for there was a stir and a flutter at the door, and gayly a troop of her guests poured in — young ladies and young fellows — chattering and frolicsome; all in their best clothes and best manners; and none — not one in the class of fifty-two — shrinking out of sight in black alpaca and linen collar and poor, bare hands.

The poorest girl in the lot had managed somehow. Only Dorothy was too poor to manage at all.

How was Mrs. De Witt to know that her luxurious home held that night a girl put to the hardest for the barest necessities of life; a girl friendless, cold, half-dressed, all but starving in that great, rich, generous, studious city — a girl tenderly reared, who had beaten about in attic lodgings and hall bedrooms like a desolate waif; who had done every kind of rough, menial work she could put her little hands to, for bread and rent and shoes and

fire and books — and never complained of it, never even “told” of it, and who sat there now on those satin cushions, so faint with hunger that the odor of the hot chocolate from the dining-room made her ravenously giddy.

In the course of that happy evening — for it was a very happy evening to those fifty young people and to the kindly lions who came to “meet” them — the thoughtful hostess found a chance to ask the child point-blank who her father was.

“An Episcopal clergyman,” said Dorothy. “He lives in East Omaha, Nebraska. Papa has n’t a *large* parish,” added Dorothy; “but he’s a good man.”

“You must come and see me,” said Mrs. De Witt gently; “and let us talk more.”

“Thank you,” said Dorothy prettily; “after I have tried for the Greek Prize! I shall have to work hard till then.”

“Ah! there,” murmured the hostess, “is our friend Professor Kosmos himself.”

But when she turned to greet him, the little girl in alpaca was gone. Dorothy had disappeared. Mrs. De Witt and the great Professor looked for her in vain for fully five minutes. Dorothy had vanished. The dismissed waitress at Thurston’s could not make up her mind to meet her customer. The inexperienced washerwoman could not face in those gorgeous parlors the employer whom she “ironed and mended” every week. Poor Dorothy slipped away home — without even her chocolate — and cried and studied and shivered half the night in her dingy attic lodging. The other girls stayed and had a beautiful time.

But Dorothy was working for the Greek Prize oration. Only one other girl-student was going to compete at all. The rest were all boys. Dorothy comforted herself by thinking how it would be if she got that prize. Two hundred dollars! A poor clergyman's daughter who had sewed, and copied for lawyers, and washed and ironed, and tutored other girls, and gone out mending carpets, and waited at Thurston's, and suffered, and shivered, and starved "for an education" for two years and a half, thought of that sum of money with a kind of dumb incredulous ecstasy.

"First of all," whispered Dorothy, "I'll get — I'll get a nice beefsteak. And then I think — I'll have some flannels."

It was the cold, spring term.

"And then," said Dorothy to herself, "I'll send something home to Papa — and Teddy. I wouldn't be *selfish* with *two hundred dollars!*"

There was unusual excitement in College Hall on a wild March night.

The Audience-Room was packed to suffocation. Only the President and Professor Kosmos, with the five contestants, occupied the platform. Judge and Mrs. De Witt were prominently seated in front. At the last it was rumored that but one young lady would compete; the other had backed out in dismay.

Now this oratorical contest was an unusual thing, the first of its kind in the country, the hobby of its originator, the famous Professor. Greek declamation, of course, was an old story; but an original

Greek oration, cast in the purest of classic style and delivered in full Greek costume by the orator, was a novelty. It was a step in advance of the popular rendering of Greek plays in the original.

The four young men upon the platform sat resplendent in effective tunics of differing colors, from whose low necks their more or less pronounced Yankee profiles towered solemnly. The solitary young woman sat modestly covered from neck to ankles with a dark cloak.

It looked like an old waterproof cloak; and indeed it was. The stage was decorated to a representation of the Acropolis, which it is to be hoped Demosthenes would have recognized if he had been offered a platform ticket.

The four young men, each in his turn, began to spout like four young North Americans in very creditable Greek syntax, and very natural New England accent. The brilliant audience listened with a mobile expression of countenance calculated to show how familiar one was with the dead languages.

The subject of Phidias was treated in yellow surah; Plato in brown nankeen; Alexander in purple merino and gold braid; while Alcibiades, the descendant of Ajax, harangued his soldiers in full military panoply. These young gentlemen were all enthusiastically applauded.

A hush preceded the announcement, in full Greek, of the last contestant of the occasion, Miss Dorothy Dreed. She would address the audience upon the plaintive and beautiful topic of Antigone.

From the shoulders of a little figure, trembling very much, the old waterproof cloak dropped slowly.

There glided to the front of the platform a lovely creature, slim and swaying, all in white, clinging white, and Greek from the twist of her dark hair to the sandal on her pretty foot and the pattern on her *chiton's* edge.

The costume was cheese-cloth, and cost five cents a yard — but who knew? who cared? It was studious, it was graceful, it was becoming, it was perfect, it was Greek — it was Antigone.

Professor Kosmos gave a start which shook the programme from his hand when the Greek goddess emerged from her black chrysalis; and when she opened her trembling lips and began to speak with the rhythmic Greek undulation dear to the heart and head of the classic scholar, and delivered an excellent philippic against Creon and a piteous, womanly wail for Polynices, and a pathetic appeal to the attentive audience for Antigone's own doomed young life, he covered his eyes with that programme and felt shaken to his soul. In *this* Antigone, buoyed in terrible struggles by love of art that no privation could quench, bearing woes that no Sophocles had sung, he recognized the face of his waitress and the voice of his washerwoman.

She took the prize — of course she took the prize. It was a foregone conclusion after five minutes.

The audience had the refinement and intuition to appreciate the quality of the girl's scholarly work and womanly nature, and rose to their feet *en masse* as Antigone, like a spirit, melted from the stage.

Afterward they sought her — they sought her everywhere. But, like a spirit, she had gone; she could not be found.



One of the girls, who knew her better than the rest (though that was little enough), said that she thought Miss Dreed was very tired and had gone home. She had worked too hard, the girl said; but she kept to herself. They were afraid she was very poor, but nobody knew; she never told; she studied too hard to make intimate friends.

"But, madam, who is this girl?" cried Professor Kosmos, in much agitation. "I want to hand her the prize myself. She's magnificent! But, madam, do you know she's *starving*?"

In ten words he told Mrs. De Witt all he knew.

Her stately form trembled with sympathy and sickness of heart.

"I was going to see her," wailed that good woman. "I got her address — but my husband has been sick. I *could n't* go. I'll go to-morrow — to-night. Call my carriage, Professor! Tell Mr. De Witt. I won't wait; I *can't* wait."

"You'd better," said the Judge calmly, coming up. "You are tired out, my dear. Go to-morrow — and the Professor will go with you."

"That I will!" cried the uneasy Professor. "It is distressing; it is unheard of. Who *is* the girl, anyhow? Does anybody know?"

"She is the daughter of an Episcopal clergyman in East Omaha," sighed Mrs. De Witt. "She told me — Reverend James Dreed."

"Castor and Pollux!" cried Professor Kosmos. "Jim Dreed! He was my classmate at Harvard, and he ranked above me. Why, I thought the world of the fellow. *Jim Dreed's daughter!*"

It was an attic indeed ; a very poor attic — not on the list of accredited boarding-places in the hands of the College Registrar. The poorest student in the University had fared better than this brave and dying, proud and silent girl.

For that she was dying when they found her no experienced eye could doubt.

She had crawled home — no one ever knew how — after that last flaring flash of strength, in whose strong flame her fading life had gone out. She had managed to creep into her cold little cot, — too exhausted to save what was left of her scanty fire, — and there her landlady, a respectable, but indifferent matron, had found her, unconscious, at noon next day.

The best of everything was done, as it is so often, at the last of all suffering and all endurance. Mrs. Goodwin De Witt's own celebrated physician came and pronounced with his own distinguished lips the fatal prognosis.

"No hope. The constitution has succumbed to want and work. Make her comfortable. That is all you can do. It is only a question of days."

In a syncope rather than a fever the girl's life ebbed quietly away. She knew them at times and looked at them gratefully. Gentle hands bore her on a litter to Mrs. De Witt's own elegant mansion. In the luxurious guest-chamber of that most Christian home, the obscure little college girl lay at the last, like a princess — nay, more, like a daughter of the house.

The tenderness of home, so long unknown by her, cherished her to the end. Motherly mercy brooded

over her, and she gave signs that she knew it, and was comforted because of it. The college sent important delegates to honor her who had honored it; but she seemed to have passed beyond caring for the college.

She referred to it only once. Then she said — and it was the last word she spoke to any person : —

“Is the prize money mine — all mine ? ”

“Yes, my dear.”

“Two — hundred — dollars, Professor ? ”

“Poor child — yes — ten times that, if you could use it.”

“Send some of it to Papa,” said Dorothy distinctly. “And give the rest to Teddy — to help Teddy go to college. Teddy is my little brother. And Papa is very poor.”

## SWEET HOME.

I HAVE been asked to record certain events which came under my observation some years since, and which are thought to have a kind of interest not always adhering to the fashionable fiction of the day. A hurried or tired man, snatching magazine or newspaper for a clutch of freedom from his own private bother, stands the main chance of metaphysics, portrait photography, or *bric-à-brac*. As I take it, the main chance is that he wants a *story*; the art of telling which bids fair to be a submerged one in the long wave of our transition period. The tale may even be a sad one; but if something happens, your busy or weary reader feels that he has what he came for. My tale is not a glad one; but if it offer no mental hyperæsthesia or moral dissection table or conversational pyrotechnics, it will at least describe a bit of real life in a plain way, and stop when it is done.

I am by profession a physician, and my name is Ferm. I am at present practicing in New York; which is neither here nor there, since it is not my own story that I have to relate. I am the only living being — for the nurse has since died — who commands all the facts of what, in the latter years of a very varied professional life, I can say is on the whole the most tragic experience which has ever entered into it.

At the time of which I must hasten to speak, without further waste of the precious tissue of words, I was in practice in a large Western city, whose name I shall withhold. I was not young; although but recently married. My youth had been one of close absorption in my profession; and I had achieved a certain foothold in it, before turning my attention to the personal aspect of life which we call human happiness. In fact, I had but just returned from my bridal trip at the time the events I speak of took place. I said a moment since that, as I was not relating my own story, personal incidents were out of order in the recital. Already am I compelled to retract this rash observation, for already I see that the personal equation gave, or may have given, a powerful, subjective coloring to the effects of the tragedy on my own mind. I am not used to writing stories. It is possible that it may not be so simple a matter to stick to "what happened" as I should have supposed. At all events, I must tell this story in my own way, good or bad, since there is no one else to tell it; and as I am not a literary man, and have no professional theory to rise or fall by, I can venture to be myself, and to do the thing naturally: which may be something.

To be frank, then, it is of no use leaving out that incident of the bridal tour. As soon as I try to revivify the situation in which young M'cAll found himself, the scene which invariably and imperiously presents itself is one which has nothing to do with the actors or action of his history, except as I have to do with it: and I, as I say, was a newly married, happy man, through whose blinding blaze of joy the

dark outline of that other man's lot looked so incredible as to scarcely come under optical laws; or it was like some grim object, one of those sea-monsters, let us say, just too large to come within reach of the glass through which they must be viewed from shore.

Let me give you, then, what I see; and what I see, at the name of Lloyd M'cAll, dashing scintillant, swift, and unfading before me — what I see is this: —

We are in our own house, on our own pleasant and prosperous street, just around the corner from the little court where the tragedy to which I refer took place. It is a brilliant morning in the decline of June. We have been two days "at home." I who have been for so many years a homeless man, fighting hand to hand for my future, hard-worked and hard-working, and glad of it, a little incredulous yet of my good luck, stand staring about me, hat in hand, preparing to go out upon my morning rounds, and surprised to find it so much slower a process than it used to be. It takes — how long! — to say good-by to my young wife.

We have said it already more times than a man cares to stop and count, and still it seems to cling and float unsaid in the very atoms of the sunny air that palpitate between us as we move apart and regard each other gravely with the solemn strangeness of our joy upon us. The house is fair and fresh — dashed with new colors, foreign to my bachelor quarters, and which seem to me like tropical foliage or flora gathered from some till now undiscovered country, and set ablaze in my gray life. My wife glides backward from me smiling; her feet cling in



her long white morning gown; she moves to the piano and seats herself there, running her fingers lightly up and down the shining keys. The sun is in the room—a flood-tide of it, throbbing on the floor and cool couches, the books, the strewn music, and falling on the hem of her garment at her feet.

“You will be late,” she says.

I consult my watch, and vow I have a half minute yet to spare. I have a consultation on hand this morning, and I am a precise man, accustomed to some military method in my duties, and giving what I require from my patients, — obedience to law. But I have never been a just-married man before.

“Hurlburt!”

I have started, but she calls me back. Like the most helpless of my sick, I, who am trained to rule, obey.

“Hurlburt, dear?”

How beautiful — how beautiful a creature a happy woman is!

“Hurlburt, shall we have the” —

“What, my love?”

“Do you want the strawberries for lunch or dinner, Hurlburt? It will weigh on my mind *all* the morning, if I don’t know beyond a moral *doubt*!”

While she is propounding this fateful question in her pretty, accented, girlish voice, she runs her fingers merrily up and down the chromatic scale; she is perched upon the edge of the piano stool with her long draperies flowing about her; she looks at me over her shoulder with a sidewise motion of her head, like a half-tamed bird’s. I laugh, and lean, and bid good-by again, and resolutely turn and leave her, once again.

I am halfway across the room, when once more she calls me in a dear voice, low and timid ; I stand in the full tide of the sun to listen to her. The long muslin curtain blows in and out in the June wind. There are flowers in the room, and a sweet-scented creeper of some sort on the hot brick walls without. The outer and inner perfumes mingle in the warm gust that breathes and brushes past me. Life, light, home, hope, love — what a world ! — for these are in it !

“Happy, Hurlburt ? ”

At this instant my bell rings sharply. I give myself one blessed moment to answer her dear question, and hurry to the hall. As I do so, she reseats herself at the piano, and without prelude begins to sing. My wife is a pleasant singer. These are the words she sings : —

“Beyond the sea of death love lies.  
Forever, yesterday, to-day,  
Angels shall ask them : ‘*Is it well ?*’  
And they shall answer : ‘*Yea.*’ ”

My boy meets me in the hall. His name is Dubby Joe. At least, I believe, strictly it is Joe Dubby, but the transposition has been so long effected by my *clientèle* that it has ceased to be questioned by anybody, least of all by Joe himself.

“It’s Pirky Trust,” says Dubby Joe. “You’re wanted right away over to Trust’s. Sister’s sick.”

Pirky Trust stands pallid on the door-steps, cap in hand.

Pirky is an overgrown, lounging boy of an indefinite age. All the Trust boys are overgrown, and all lounge ; there are five of them ; they look like

obtuse angles, and behave as they look, I am apt to think, when I treat their sister, — the only woman in a big, motherless, masculine, burly family, and “put upon” accordingly.

“What is the matter with your sister, Pirky?”

“Dunno,” says Pirky, after some thought. “They’re all scared of her. She’s dangerous. They told me to bring you lickity-split.”

“Who is with her — who sent you, Pirky?”

“Dr. M’cAll sent me. He’s there. And pa’s there. And Mrs. Gumbrugen’s there — and Gumbrugen. But he would n’t come for you himself, Jim Gumbrugen would n’t. He said I was to go. He won’t go out of her sight. I guess they think she’s pretty dangerous. Dr. M’cAll told me to run’s I never run in all my born days — I’m beat out,” panted Pirky plaintively.

It is a waste of moral force to reason with the essential selfishness of Pirky. I have long since learned that. He loves his sister, too; they all do as much as that. Acutely as I should enjoy picking Pirky up by the back of the neck, as one does a puppy, and flinging him halfway home, I am so conscious what a breach of politico-spiritual economy that would be that I content myself with saying mildly: —

“Jump into the carriage, Pirky, and I’ll take you round;” and Pirky jumps — no, I should say that Pirky, panting, pathetic, with the lofty moral expression of a martyr, lunges in.

I shut the front door and pass out into the hot, bright morning. The lines in the red brick walk show hard and strange to me, and I am conscious of

counting them as I go out over our little front yard and down the steps to the sidewalk. All my nature, made idle and unsympathetic by happiness, braces itself to its task, — the healer's ceaseless, remorseless, blessed task of holding to his heart, though it stab him to his hurt — nay, though it stab him to his death, suffering not his own.

I linger to send Dubby Joe up-town to defer the consultation; for I see — no, I do *not* see what is before me. As Pirky and I turn the buggy round, I look back at the open window, through which I hear my young wife singing still: —

“Beyond the sea of death love lies” —

Here, properly speaking, my story should begin. Let me tell you, then, in as few words as may be, who and what they were of whom I write.

Lloyd M'cAll was the young doctor to whom I gave my overflow work. I meant to take him into partnership some day. He was the son of a personal friend. I had always known him; had been his preceptor; given him his first patient; hurrahed over his first cure; helped him over his first failure; loved him and trusted him, and “made of him,” as the women say. He was a sensitive, lovable fellow, and deserved all that he ever had from me, and more.

Home Trust was our patient; for some time past M'cAll had treated her. She was a sick woman, worn out in the service of an exacting, thoughtless family of six men, who demanded and found mother, daughter, sister, nurse, seamstress, laundress, cook, in the body and soul of one delicate girl.

He was a gentleman.

She was the daughter of a very respectable baker.

He was her physician.

She was his patient.

He was well-born, well-bred, well-read, and not without talent.

Her simple education at the common schools came to an end on the day of her mother's funeral, when, at the age of fourteen, she came home to "do for" the bereaved baker and the five long, loungy, little Trust boys.

He was unwedded and unbound.

She was engaged to be married.

He was a man of high aspirations and delicate honor.

She was a charming creature.

Let me recall what I can of the girl's personelle. Perhaps I did not at the time occupy myself to call her beautiful, but I was a busy man. My patients moved beneath my orders like pawns upon a chess-board, and so that they moved obediently I had little time to think further about them. To my own mind, the relation between patient and physician is one so peculiar to itself, so essentially out of the natural environment in which human beings meet, and ought to meet, that the introduction of anything like personal sentiment into it is unpleasant to me. I do not like even to treat my own wife. She was never my patient. I find it difficult to estimate, perhaps, the full emotional chances of the relation.

It is true, perhaps, that there was something about Miss Trust which one had to think about; for I find that some little personal details occur to me

quite easily. I am sure she had a pleasant figure, and that she was graceful in her motions. There was something quiet and pleasing about her dress, which never flaunted or flared into the incoherent fashions favored by women, especially by young women of her social opportunities; there was a gentle and nunlike effect to the colors she wore, or else to her way of wearing them — not that the girl was a bit of a nun — rather a real piece of human nature, sweet and fresh. She had those large gray eyes of the iridescent type, which deepen to dark brown when one is much moved. She had a refined voice, and the merriest laugh that ever caught itself in a sick-room. People are feared or respected for this or that; they are beloved for their laugh or smile. Home Trust was too young to smile. We had them — widows, and women with their lives behind them; plenty of them in our *clientèle*; who smiled on their doctors like Sisters of Charity, or even (at respectful intervals) like angels. This sick girl still laughed. It was delightful.

Her name was Homer — E. Homer, I think, Ellen, Eliza, Emma or whatever — but the name which the poor child's mother had attached to her in this beautiful contraction clung to her like her own bright hair. Now that I think of it, she was a blonde.

This loving and lovable name had been improved upon in a pretty way.

I really cannot say what started it — whether it was the sweet fame of her service for that great hulking family, who would no more have thought of such a thing themselves than would last year's buns;



or whether it was her rare way of "getting along" with her neighbors, not one of whom but was in debt to her for some of the endless kindnesses which now and then make neighborhood an ideal matter; or whether it grew out of her attention to neglected children, to whom at her busiest and her weariest she had a passion for offering all sorts of little hospitalities and brooding, motherly care; or whether the name, as I have heard it suggested, originated with a poor, wretched girl, who sought refuge at the baker's door one winter night in a deadly storm, and was found to be in a dying condition.

Home Trust gave her own decent room to this pitious creature, and nursed her there until she died. The nearest hospital of any class which would admit the patient was in a neighboring city. Suffering and risk were involved in the transfer of a person at so low a stage of vitality.

"It can't be thought of," said Miss Trust quietly, and so kept the stranger, making no fuss about it, and offered the sacred hospitalities of a good woman's soul to this poor wretch while she had need of them. The outcast died, praying in her arms, — praying, I have been told, most pathetically and passionately, in a way to break one's heart. This woman, it has been sometimes said, first called the young girl — for she was then a very young girl — Sweet Home.

Nobody was laggard to catch the charming nickname; and Sweet Home she was, and shall be still to all who knew her and knew her bright and sweet unselfishness in every attitude she took toward life. She never had an easy life, poor child. Let these things not be forgotten of her now.

Her father loved her, and overworked her. The five lumbering boys loved her and imposed upon her. It was their nature to. The mother had always suffered herself to be imposed upon. She took feminine existence at the masculine estimate, and thus, by the simplest laws of hereditary transmission, the sons imposed, the daughter endured, and so it went. Sweet Home, a vigorous, cheerful, ardent girl, with that laugh of hers, and a dimple, full of good humor and good blood and good vitality — at 20, ailed and paled and laughed at it, and would not talk about it, and went on ailing and paling and laughing and working, using up the vital centres, and at last broke down roundly with what it is now fashionable to diagnose as nervous exhaustion. This in a family — and a family of men — where nobody but herself possessed a nerve that could be brought under the microscope was serious business. I remember once trying to explain to the baker why his daughter could no longer officiate at the family wash-tub, by suggesting that he make rolls to-morrow without baking-powder.

“Ye mean she’s lost her yeast?” asked the father, after some conscientious reflection.

M’cAll and I had tried to do the best we could for her. I think I may say as much as that. Under consultation, I had left the case for six months largely to my junior. I saw the girl whenever necessary; but I was driven, and she seemed contented enough with him. They got on very well together, and I kept, or thought I kept, her confidence. Perhaps I flattered myself just there, with the subtle self-delusion which a doctor is apt to cherish about

his established patients. We are men of weaknesses peculiar to our profession.

Miss Trust was expected to marry a person by the name of James Gumbrugen. He drove an express cart. His mother was a professional nurse. I had often employed her; they were very respectable people. The engagement had lasted some years. I believe she said she was waiting for Pirky to grow up. Pirky was the youngest, the longest, the lankest, the noisiest, the stupidest, the most spoiled, and the least considerate of the tribe; but sometimes when I observed Gumbrugen, I was not in a hurry for Pirky to grow up. There was nothing the matter with the fellow that I know of, except that he was bald and had a double chin. He was a highly respectable young man. He was pertinaciously loyal to Sweet Home, and perfectly willing to wait for Pirky to grow up. I suppose a man may be very much in love even if he has a double chin. The girl had never expressed any dissatisfaction with her lover — and as I repeat, he was a most estimable young person. At the time of which I speak Miss Trust had improved a little. M'cAll and I began to have hopes that she might not become a chronic invalid, a prospect of which we had never given any intimation to the patient, as I was afterward glad to remember. She expected — I may say, she exacted — recovery with the radiant hopefulness of her resolute nature, and bore her sufferings as sweetly and trustfully as she bore with Pirky, waiting for health, as she waited for the other tyrant to “grow up.” She was a very lovable patient.

Lloyd M'cAll was that most wretched of beings, a morbidly sensitive or sensitively morbid man. In the medical school, where he was an excellent, though not a brilliant scholar, he took life hard. He fainted in the dissecting-room four times; but pluckily got up and at it again, till he conquered himself, and produced admirable, painstaking demonstrations. He used to tell with feeling the story of Berlioz, who would have studied medicine, but, at his first glance at the "material," turned and fled, dashing through the open window and home, to roll on the floor in agony for days; hence the world lost a poor doctor and gained a great musician.

Throughout his course of study, young M'cAll *worried*. If he failed in a recitation, forthwith he was prepared to fail of his diploma. If he did a good thing, he was oppressed by his sense of its mediocrity. If a professor praised him, he carefully weighed the relative importance of the professor.

The drudgery of mastering anatomy — one of the hardest of recitation-room studies to be found in the educated world — disheartened him out of all proportion. He crammed for his examinations at night on strong coffee, went to them trembling in every nerve, and was ill for days thereafter. He was a faithful student, but he never knew a student's comfort. He saw life steadily, as well as whole, through magnifying glasses of conscientious discouragement. I never thought him quite well. His father had died of excessive smoking, and there was a very nervous diathesis.

With all this he was a refined and attractive fel-

low, with decided power of his own kind, and a prospect of round success if he had a fair amount of human happiness. He was one of those people on whom suffering acts like vitriol, and whom a given amount of it eats out. He was a conscientious, studious physician and gaining a good practice. I trusted him with my own work to any extent.

With a man of this sort nothing is so sure as that a woman will make or mar him; and a *cheerful* woman is a foreordained influence of a powerful kind.

"I sometimes think," he said once, when he was dining with me, "that the best kind of a wife a man could have would be a woman of a sunny disposition who was a little shallow."

The next day he came and told me he hoped I would n't mistake his meaning, and wished me to understand that his ideal of Woman was a remarkably high one.

He was not in love, and his freedom from all emotional entanglement gave him special value, to my mind, in the business I turned over to him. He worked as impersonally as a numeral on a slate, and where his duty was his heart was.

To Lloyd M'cAll, and not to me (and this was as it should be, or if it were not I had only myself to thank for it), to the devoted young assistant, and not to the busy family doctor, the summons had gone which brought sudden help to urgent need at the bedside of Sweet Home. He was there before me; had been sent for, Pirky said, in the night, besides; and yesterday afternoon—he made a long call yesterday; and again, Pirky thought, the day before.

How it had all been, who knew? Who knows? They had been necessarily often together—she in her charm and helplessness, he in his sensitive youth. On the iron discreetness due to their sacred relation I would have staked my honor that he had never encroached by the breadth of a graver's point. He was a physician, and a gentleman. She was his patient. He was a man of unblemished integrity. And to distrust *her* would have been like distrusting the mountain snow. No one did distrust. At the worst and most, and when we knew all that was ever known, the breath of a doubt was never cast upon those two. Their spotless memory became, in a solemn and awful sense, the guarded treasure of their friends.

Would he have wedded her? Would she have broken her troth for him? Did they love? Silently? Confessedly? Calmly? Madly? Did they face their position, or evade its facts? Curse their fate, or vow to conquer it? Did he plead, and she recede? Did he hope, and she despair? Did she wear that beautiful, gossamer mask of deceit which women wear for their own strange nature's sake, when love, the nature within the nature, bids them reveal love's dazzling face? Or did she wear that deeper, sadder, more impenetrable disguise to which a woman betakes her when she would protect from himself the man she loves? Did she thus? Did he so? Was it this? Was it that? God knows—and they. Let him who knoweth answer.

Pirky hurried on before me into the tidy home where he had been served like a sultan and behaved like an imp for eleven years, and noisily kicked open the door with his cowhide boots.



“Be quiet, Pirky! How many times have Dr. M’cAll and I told you that noise hurts your sister, and that you” —

I paused. One look told me that she would suffer no more from Pirky’s boots. Pirky might “grow up,” now, as fast or as slow as he pleased, or not at all, as he pleased. His day for torturing those delicately poised nerves and that more delicate heart was over.

Her father was in the room, and Mrs. Gumbrugen. Gumbrugen himself was there, and one of the older Trust boys, and M’cAll.

On the bed, in the corner of the neat, modest, maidenly room, Sweet Home lay, with all her yellow hair about her, in her white night-clothes, lightly covered with a thin blanket—even then a lovely creature.

She was still breathing; the faint, paralytic breathing which, with certain other symptoms not necessary to dwell upon, told me on the instant at least a part of the terrible story.

As I entered the room Lloyd M’cAll stirred, but did not speak. He was standing with his back to the patient. He was not a tall man, and he appeared to have shrunken in height, and to crouch as a person does before a blast. His pallor was heightened, perhaps, by his dead-black hair and beard and black eyes; but he seemed to me the palest breathing man I had ever seen in my life. It was Gumbrugen who made way for me beside the bed.

“You—you’ll save her,” he said confidently. “You’ve had more experience. You’re an older man. I said you’d save her.” But a quiver not

confident caught the double chin, and his bald head sank into his hands.

"Dying, doctor?" whispered Mrs. Gumbrugen.

"She is a dead woman!"

I spoke passionately. It seemed incredible that I had not been called before. It was no time — there might never be a time — to tell these people the truth; to say that Sweet Home was dying from an overdose of — something — beyond all human doubt; chloral I should have said.

"What ails my girl?" The big baker straightened himself with a dazed, dull look. "She used to be a healthy girl. I never *thought* she'd be likely to *die*."

Even as he spoke, and I bent over the poor girl, to hold her gentle hands — constrained by an anguish half anger, that she should die without her old doctor to help her — even as her father spoke, Sweet Home passed beyond that phase of life which we call death, and that stage of resolve which is within the power of recall.

As I put my hand upon her eyes I heard a little click or thud upon the floor. It was Pirky pulling off his boots and tramping in his stocking-feet to see how quiet he could be; like many wiser and better than Pirky, rendering unto remorse the things that were love's, and unto death the things that were life's.

. . . . .  
At this moment a voice, which I can describe by no other word than *haggard*, said slowly behind me:

"Doctor Ferm, is she dead?"

"Yes, M'eAll."

"Quite dead? I don't want to look at her."

"Quite dead."

"You'll do everything, will you? I — must go home a minute. I sha'n't be gone long."

"I shall wish to see you as soon as possible, M'eAll."

"Very well, sir. Good-by, sir."

"Good-by, M'eAll."

I said this mechanically, not turning to look at my assistant. I was more shocked than by anything that had occurred in my professional life before, and had not found my thoughts or their expression; both seemed a tremendous duty, difficult and delicate past belief.

I gazed into the dead girl's face long and searchingly. Did I summon the corpse to speak? Did I bid the soul to answer? I am a busy, practical man, not given to fancies. What could the evasive, illusive, vanished spirit do with my unpracticed imagination? How should it find a vocabulary for one who had never opened the grammar of its language? Like most men of my vocation, what is called spiritual truth was the last thing that I had made time — or perhaps taste — to think about. Yet, at that moment, I found it not possible to believe that a dose of chloral had *stopped* the delicate "complex" of beauty and sweetness and unselfishness, of hope and vitality, and half-developed joy-giving and joy-receiving power which we called Sweet Home.

"Poor child!" I said. "Poor child!"

A little ashamed of the consulting physician for

exhibiting an emotion in the presence of those whose emotion he was expected to restrain, I turned to recover myself, and found that Mrs. Gumbrugen and I were alone. Father, brothers, and lover had instinctively got themselves away, and left us with our patient.

Mrs. Gumbrugen was an accomplished nurse; she was accustomed to possess herself. I do not know that I had ever seen her weep before, and when she lifted her sturdy face to me, streaming with tears, I experienced a feeling almost of embarrassment.

A general could hardly be more the victim of the unexpected who found his aid in hysterics on the eve of battle.

"I was fond of her," sobbed Mrs. Gumbrugen; "we all were. And Jamie" —

Truly, I suppose there is no reason in law or gospel why an expressman with a double chin should not be known as "Jamie;" but it took time for me to reconcile these facts to my imagination; or to stammer forth the phrase or two of comfort due, as I must perceive, to the mother of Sweet Home's bereaved lover. This interval, however, was enough for the trained nature of one of my best nurses to regain itself; and when Mrs. Gumbrugen spoke again it was quite with her usual professional qualities of calm, clearness, and conciseness.

She gave me the facts, such as I asked for — no more, no less — in her customary method and manner. She turned her personal emotion out-of-doors and put herself on duty. My command was her response, and thus I had the circumstances; all there were — or all there seemed.

At half-past two o'clock in the morning Home Trust had called for help. She complained of great, indefinite distress, and seemed more agitated by it than she was ever known to be by the fluctuations of her illness. The boy Pirky slept in the next room, and she had tried to wake him, but ineffectually; whether he did n't hear, or would n't hear, probably Pirky alone would ever fully know. Her groans had aroused her father, after no one knew how long a period of solitary suffering. Frightened and helpless, he had fled to the neighbors for aid. By good fortune Mrs. Gumbrugen was at home, and had reached the sick-room in less time than it would have taken a less experienced woman to get on her stockings.

Sweet Home was then quite conscious, knew her, thanked her, kissed her, and said she was glad to have a woman there. She asked that Dr. M'cAll be sent for, and the baker roused one of the older boys, and brought him with such speed as might be. Mrs. Gumbrugen had, indeed, suggested that I be summoned, but the patient objected. She seemed by that time dazed and stupid, and the nurse thought her half asleep; but she intimated a decided preference for Dr. M'cAll; seeming to try to say something to the effect that he had been managing the case, or that he was to be trusted, but failing to say it exactly; only making it clear that she desired and expected his presence.

"He is a good doctor," she murmured once. "Everybody calls him so. He has done me a great deal of good. He has helped me very much."

Once, besides, she spoke quite distinctly, rousing with some effort to say: —

"Tell Jamie"—but what she would have told Jamie, Jamie will never know. The sentence broke, like a sentence in a dream, and after this she spoke but once again, quite coherently, to say that it was growing cold, and she was afraid Pirky was uncovered; would Mrs. Gumbrugen go in and look after Pirky?

Dr. M'cAll came. He made no delay in replying to the summons, but the patient was either far in sleep or stupor before he came. She answered his questions, Mrs. Gumbrugen thought, by signs or murmurs; she was sure that no conversation passed between them. It was certain, however, that Sweet Home knew him. When he was leaving her she put out her hand and laid it appealingly upon his arm for a moment; then dropped it heavily upon the bed and turned her face away. Mrs. Gumbrugen suffered herself to say that it occurred to her that the patient did not *want* to talk.

"It crossed my mind, sir, she wanted the doctor to stay; but she would n't say—or she could n't say—not so much as that. However, he did n't."

Mrs. Gumbrugen thought that Dr. M'cAll had not considered the patient dangerously ill. He had stayed with her an hour, prescribed for her, observed the working of his prescriptions, desired the nurse to remain in the room the rest of the night, and asked to be called at once if there were any new symptoms. His house was just around the corner, opposite my own; and the father agreed that somebody should sit up, ready to call the doctor if needed again before the early hour at which he had promised to return. Dr. M'cAll said that Miss Trust was



doing well, and that she would sleep off her nervous distress, he thought.

“Do you know what Dr. M’cAll prescribed?”

“He said chloral, sir.”

“Did he happen to mention the dose?”

“He told me that he had given the usual dose — no, a little less than the usual dose.”

“Are you sure of this?”

“Perfectly sure.”

“He did not speak of a large dose, in view of her great distress? Or perhaps he repeated the first one?”

“He said it was rather less than the usual dose, and he did not repeat it.”

“Did you stay with Miss Trust the rest of the night?”

“I did, sir. She slept quietly, and I thought she was doing remarkably well. I slept some myself, sitting in the rocking-chair.”

“When and why did you send for Dr. M’cAll again?”

“At quarter before eight. And because I found her as you saw. I sent for you at the same time. Pirky stopped for Dr. M’cAll, and then he went for you. By some mistake he came back here first. I told him to hurry back. Understanding her condition I allowed my son to be called; it could do no harm, and it was his right to be present.”

“What did Dr. M’cAll say when he got here?”

“He turned round — like that! — and told Pirky to go for you as fast as he could go.”

“What else did he say?”

“Nothing.”

“Nothing at all?”

“Not one word, sir. He stood and looked at her. That was just all. He saw it was too late—we all did. He never spoke one word more from the time he got here till he spoke to yourself, Dr. Ferm, and asked you: ‘Is she dead?’”

Now M’cAll, who should surely have been with me by this time, had not returned. It was natural, under the circumstances, that he should be loth to hasten back to that house, and with a sudden movement of the heart toward him,—my pet student, my dear boy, the sensitive, promising, conscientious young fellow, whose mistake I could well-nigh have taken upon myself if I might have spared it him,—with unbearable pity in my soul, I left the dead and sought the living sufferer.

Dr. M’cAll occupied a suite of rooms in a comfortable boarding-house not far from my own house; his offices, reception and consultation rooms were on the first floor, and as I ran up the steps and was hurrying in to find him I was met by James Gumbrugen face to face. He was about closing the front door, and was exceedingly agitated.

“I was just coming for you, doctor,” he said, with a scared look. “They sent me. Something has happened. I came over to see M’cAll—for I wanted to talk with him about—about the case. I’ve nothing against Dr. M’cAll, but I wanted to talk with him a little. Seems as if he’d ought to know she was—the whole thing’s been so sudden, doctor! I—she—I’d been courting her four years, you know. We was to have got married when Pirky grew up. I came over to see M’cAll—to ask him some questions

I wanted to ask. But they would n't let me see him. Something has happened. Mrs. Chipper sent me to bring you right away. She told me to bring you, and say nothing to nobody, and I" —

I broke past Gumbrugen and dashed in. M'cAll's landlady, a frivolous, merry little woman, met me within and caught me by the hand with a clutch that made my heart stand still. Mrs. Chipper's face was one of those rudimentary feminine faces which never seem to have developed beyond the stage of cackling laughter. It turned itself up to me, blanched to the last vein, rigid, and cast into a mould of horror which seemed all the more horrible because she usually cackled.

"For God's sake, Dr. Ferm — shut the door and keep Gumbrugen out. Keep everybody out — for the sake of the house. Help me to keep it quiet as long as I can! Come with me. . . . This way! And tell me what to do!"

She led me down the hall, through a side-door, into the consulting-room. M'cAll was not there. The room wore its usual aspect, and gave no signs of the unknown tragedy which I had dashed in expecting — why? — to find. Folly! My nerves were overstrained, shaken; I flung myself into his chair and opened a window, and occupied myself with trying to conceal from the rudimentary woman the shock which she had given me. But she with absolute composure and that blanched, clay-like face, was locking the door — all the doors — in silence, and with a purpose in which the instinct of the landlady overcame every other human emotion.

"Now," she said, "no one can come in. See here!"

I was sitting in M'eAll's office-chair, at his office-table; the table was littered with letters, ledgers, note-books, his microscope, laryngoscope, a volume of therapeutics, Gross's Surgery, and so on.

On the table a piece of his own engraved professional note-paper caught my eye. Mrs. Chipper, without a word, put her shaking, little, ringed finger upon the white page. At the top of it was written:—

“My dear Doctor” —

There the hand had paused. The purpose had changed. What had superseded it? The ink was still damp.

“Now,” said the landlady, “come with me.” She led me without a word, and without a word I followed. She led me to the reception-room, and with a mute, womanly sign of sympathy to prepare me for what we saw, hid her frivolous face upon her hands and sobbed out such heart as she had.

Lloyd M'eAll lay upon the floor. His Smith & Wesson 38-cartridge revolver lay beside him half-clutched yet in his outstretched hand. He had come straight from Home Trust's death-bed, locked the door of his reception-room, forgotten or omitted to lock the others; held counsel with his own soul for such time as he would or could; put the muzzle at the base of the brain, and fired. When the report came, the landlady (whose lodgers, chiefly gentlemen, were at their places of business, and hence no publicity had yet been given to the event) had the presence of mind to go in through the consulting-room alone. He was quite dead when she found him.

All things in this world can be measured, esti-

mated, counted upon, brought under law, forced into science, except the substance and movement of the spirit. Of air, ocean, earth, we can predict. Electricity, steam, flame, we can conquer. We foreknow the tornado, forecast the pestilence, and calculate the relation of unborn generations to their means of subsistence in uninhabited lands. Who has ever formulated human joy? Who has ever brought human suffering under a binocular? In whose crucible has the capacity of anguish in a sensitive — in what we flippantly and ignorantly call a morbid — soul ever been reduced to its chemical elements?

Who was to say what the soul of Lloyd M'cAll, supposing himself to have committed the ultimate blunder of his profession, at the outset of his young life, upon the patient who trusted him, upon the woman, whom perhaps (God knows!) he loved; who was to say, I ask, what the soul of Lloyd M'cAll endured in those moments which separated his discovery of the facts from his method of escaping their corrosion upon his will-power? If we compute the endurance by the deed, where are our scales to weigh it? I, for one, have none.

However that may be, Sweet Home was dead from a dose of chloral, and the hand that had unconsciously done the deed had consciously done the worse; and there lay the two that June morning, past all philosophy, faith, or help. And life and law, and order and trust and obedience must move on without a jar across this ghastly obstruction, and there was my poor boy to be cared for, and Mrs. Chipper to be managed, and Gumbrugen to be sent home — and Dubby Joe to appear and say that the

consultation must come off at the earliest possible moment, for the other doctor had fits, and had got to go — and like a spoke in the wheel of fate I turned to the next revolution.

It was when I was hurrying back from the consultation to M'cAll's rooms that Mrs. Gumbrugen stopped my buggy. She was watching for me, with her bonnet and shawl on.

"I know you haven't a minute to spare, doctor. But I've got something to tell you. I thought I'd be ready to jump right into the carriage. I'll go over there with you if you say. It'll save time."

Mrs. Gumbrugen never wasted words or constructed scenes. She had my confidence as much as my probe had. I took her in and took her there, and shut the doors, and before my dear boy's body bade her speak.

"I think it is time," she said, "for me to tell you all I know."

"Very well, Mrs. Gumbrugen. What do you know?"

"Dr. Ferm, I shall surprise you."

"The more reason for doing so at once."

"He did not do it, doctor."

"I do not understand you."

"Dr. M'cAll's prescription was not the cause of Home Trust's death. It is a very sad business, sir, but not *that*."

"Go on," I said, after a moment's hesitation.

"Dr. M'cAll should have waited," said Mrs. Gumbrugen with some feeling, either personal or professional, or both, "before he brought this thing on us — to be talked over. He should have known that



the dose he gave, does n't do *that*. If he had waited at least to consult with you or me — he might have, I think !”

“Poor fellow !” I said.

“Well, perhaps so, sir. I am not wishing to be uncharitable to a dead man — though I'm not so gentle in my ways as yourself, Dr. Ferm, and I am wrought upon, I'll not deny it, for Jamie's sake. See here, sir !”

She drew from her pocket a little bottle, which she put into my hand. It was marked *Hydrate Chloral*, and bore the imprint of a down-town apothecary. It was a strong solution. The bottle was empty.

Still perplexed or dull, I turned the bottle over and over in my hand, helplessly regarding Mrs. Gumbrugen.

“It was hers,” said the nurse, in a lower and gentler tone. “She did it.”

“She did it ?”

“Home took it herself, Dr. Ferm. I have been uneasy for weeks. I did not like the way she talked nor the way she acted. I've seen too much of such things. She's been a low-spirited woman for a long time. And the lower her spirits the more she laughed and the merrier. That's her way. She was discouraged about her health, I think,” added Mrs. Gumbrugen, with slow emphasis. “She had everything else to be contented with. She was going to marry my boy. If you please, Dr. Ferm” — the mother's voice faltered — “we won't tell my boy what I am telling you. If I can help it, I'd rather Jamie would n't know. Jamie was very fond of her” —

"I found this bottle," continued Mrs. Gumbrugen, collecting herself, after a moment's weakness, "under the mattress when I came to do for her. I am convinced she took the chloral last night. Maybe it was to get to sleep; maybe it was n't. There's nobody to say. I know what I think! She took enough — as you see. She must have died. When she sent for Dr. M'cAll, she was a poisoned woman."

"And he gave her" — I checked myself.

"At least he did not do it! He did not do it!"

I turned with an awful yearning to the mute figure by the side of which we stood. Had death no ears to hear? Had life no lips to cry? Was there in all science and all faith, in fact or dream, or invention or creation, *no way* to make him understand?

"Dead folks are dead folks," said Mrs. Gumbrugen, in her just, orderly voice. "It's the living have the worst of things."

. . . . .

I did not go home to lunch that day till the last moment. It was not easy to go. Come what might, I would not darken the bridal look in those sweet eyes with the grim details of my calling. This I was resolved upon.

Perhaps I was right; perhaps I was wrong; but at least I began our married life in that way, out of a full determination to spare her if, and all, I could. No man knows quite how to make a woman happy in the wisest way; and years after I may have learned to reconsider this determination for her own sake. But then — why, we had not been married two weeks!

I went back to her slowly. As I began to put those two mute faces behind me, I perceived that it was still June — hot, bright, blossoming, singing June. It was noon, and the walls that held what I had left cast no shadow upon the paved streets across which I moved. When I came to my own front yard, I found myself counting the bricks again; but this time I finished the count. There were one hundred and six.

As I stood with my hand on my latch a spray of the creeper leaned over, stirred by the warm wind, and seemed to observe me; the perfume was almost sickeningly sweet. Involuntarily, I put out my hand and pushed the flower back.

June, home, hope, love — these were in the world; but was the world of these?

I went in softly. She did not hear me at first. She was in the inner room, our dining-room, arranging grape leaves about the strawberries in a glittering glass dish; her white hands shone against the red fruit. She still wore that pretty morning gown, but had put fresh color — so I saw — in the ribbons at her throat and waist. As I stood, to watch her, the long curtain blew again in the peaceful wind, with a dainty, idle motion, as if nothing harder or sadder than its pretty play had been done in our dear home that summer morning long.

She was humming to herself, below her breath, not knowing that she was overheard, and I made out that she sang snatches of the same song which had beaten time in her happy thoughts since I left her all those hours ago: —

“Beyond the sea of death love lies.”

Turning at last with the languorous sweet motion of happiness and ease, my young wife moved and saw me. She stretched out her lovely arms, and, half in shyness, half in rapturous impulse, met me — like a soft wave of joy broken upon the shore of my heart.

“Were you too late, dear Love?” she asked. And presently, for I did not answer, — could not, dared not answer, — she stirred and put her hand upon my cheek, and said: —

“Happy, Hurlburt?”

But when I put her down and moved apart to hide my agitated face, my dear one, in the very brimming of her joy, broke into clear and passionate singing, half unconscious that she did; and while she drew the blinds and gathered the green shadow into our cool, still home, and shut out the world, and shut in ourselves, and shut out sorrow, and shut in delight, and shut out all hard things and all cruel questions, and shut in all blessed truths and all simple answers, thus again I heard her sing: —

“Beyond the sea of death love lies.  
Forever, yesterday, to-day,  
Angels shall ask them, ‘Is it well?’  
And they shall answer” —

## TOO LATE.

JOHN TRUE came home from his work one day with a slower step than usual. It was a June day in 1861. John True lived in Dogberry, a Massachusetts village. He was a house-painter by trade, and had on his working clothes, which were not becoming, being of an unassured bleached-cotton color to begin with, and splashed with conflicting tones of paint, in which red had obtained a murderous predominance. But John had one of the figures that conquer clothes; he swung easily at the hips, carried a straight shoulder, and put down an elastic foot. He had curly hair, and the indefinable expression in the background of the eyes, belonging to a man who has a happy home.

It was not a sharply individualized home, seen from the outside, being a cheap white house, like other cheap white houses in Dogberry; too heavy in the brows, too narrow in the cheeks, uncertain in the jaws, and of a chilly expression. It had white shades and a white fence, and an acre or two of land, wherein nature seemed to relieve herself in a gasp of green, and to dash up the deep sepia loam, where the potatoes grew, in a riotous outburst of personal feeling. There were currant-bushes in the garden, and a tall cherry-tree, which budded late, now pale with dropping blossoms. As the master of the

house came up the front yard he stopped to examine the cinnamon rose-bush, and looked over at the cabbages in the southwest corner.

A child's voice came through the open door and windows — a little boy's voice; he was singing; he sang one of the Sunday-school hymns taught in the emaciated (white) meeting-house on the hill beyond the village. The result of his musical effort was somewhat to this effect: —

“ My omeizzen Ye-ev-ing, my  
Resizzenere;  
Ven wy shoulda ma-a-ma,  
If twyalsypere ? ”

Another voice sounded clearly within, but that one sang a wordless lullaby, “'sh-shing” to sleep a gurgling baby; and neither the coo nor the lullaby struck a false note against the shrilling song of the theologically minded little musician, who piped on gloriously.

John True, out by the cinnamon rose-bush, said to himself: —

“ Happy to-day, ain't they ? ” And then, when he had said it to himself, he said it aloud to the roses: —

“ The folks seem happy to-day, don't they ? ”

Nobody from within had seen him yet, and he lingered about, fussing with the bush. In general, he held that the floral kingdom was created for the amusement of the female mind; cabbages called for a certain masculine force. But he picked a rose-bud, clumsily, before he went to examine the cabbages, which he did with a vague attention that overflowed upon the potato-patch; he had a sense of



strengthening his character by concentration upon these sturdier facts. It took him a good while to get into the house.

He came at last, with what seemed a reluctant step, in which there was this curious thing to be noticed, that he trod softly, like a man who is afraid that he shall wake the sleeping. Yet clearly the baby had nothing to do with it, for little Mrs. True's was one of those exceptionally blessed households in which the baby's nap is not a thing of terror and a gloom forever to all mature existence. As a rule, the more noise you made, the better the True babies slept.

The door was open, as I said, and John True stepped in on tiptoe. A rag mat, clean enough but very old, lay in the little entry; he looked down at it as he entered, wiping his feet, which were dusty dry, with mechanical patience. The mat had a blue flannel rose on it, touched off in black alpaca on one of the petals where the flannel had given out. A child's tin horse, without a head, stood in the entry, and trundled about when his foot hit it.

The little tinkling noise betrayed his presence, and the lullaby in the inner room stopped abruptly. A woman's voice said:—

“That you?”

“It's me,” said John. He hung his hat up and stood hesitating. The little boy was singing with piercing shrillness:—

“Wy shoulda ma-a-ma  
If twyalsypere?  
My omeizzen Ye-ev”—

“'Sh-sh, Tommy!” interrupted the woman's voice,

dropping on meanwhile contentedly into her lullaby. "Go see who that is in the entry, Tommy. 'Sh-sh-sh-h, my dear! Lie still and slu-umber!"

Tommy checked himself in the midst of his religious aspirations and ran to the door, where he stood peering — a pleasant little rogue, well built and red; he had on a green gingham apron, and had been eating gingerbread. Tommy said: —

"W'y, it's *Pupper!*" with the eternal surprise of childhood, to which all things are forever new. His father patted him on the head, and said: —

"There, there!" while he re-hung his stained straw hat, which had tumbled down. The hat was brown, and had a row of air-holes perforated about the crown — a new fashion then. True began to count them as he stood staring. The child crept back and tugged at his mother. True heard him tell her that "*Pupper*" didn't kiss him, but only spatting him. The mother crooned on to the gurgling baby.

"I believe I'll change my clothes first," called John, without entering the room.

The lullaby stopped short.

"Why, John!"

John flushed, and went in at once. As he entered the room, details blurred and slipped away before his eyes; he perceived chiefly that the windows and blinds were open, and the late summer light came quivering into the western corner of the room where the woman sat with the baby; the child fell heavily back upon her long, maternal arms away from her half-draped breast. The light blinded her a little, and she moved out of it, holding up her face like a

Madonna to the Lord. John kissed her with the silent reverence with which even a house-painter, my æsthetic friends, may kiss his wife when she gets one of these aureolas about her.

"*Now, Father,*" she said, with sweet mock reproach in a voice to which clearly reproaching was not natural, "you may go change your clothes! The idea! I guess it would have been the first time for twelve years, would n't it, Tommy? Think of Pupper stopping to clean up before he kissed us, Tommy!"

"I'd got an extra daub on to-day," said John True, glancing down at his unbleached cotton blouse and overalls. "I've been to work to Seth Grimace's. There seemed to be such lots of — red."

He went away into the shed and hung up the splashed and spattered clothes. It took him longer than usual to "clean up," a process which he conducted by the aid of the yard pump and kitchen roller. Some of the paints especially would not come off his fingers, even for the turpentine.

"I hate to paint a red house," he said.

His wife called him two or three times to supper before he answered:—

"Yes, yes, Mary," and with a deep breath joined himself to them. He felt all the dear and delicate currents of daily life sweep him on. It was like any other supper, after all. He sat, shining and soapy, at the head of the pine table. Tommy was beside him; the baby was sound asleep in the sitting-room. Their mother had brushed her hair, and sat smiling. She talked about the doughnuts and the hash. He ate both with relish—he felt very hun-

gry. Everything seemed to be going on, and would go on forever.

"Where's Sissy?" asked John suddenly, laying down a pickled cucumber that was already melting at his lips.

"Why, she's gone to the Sunday-school picnic, you know," said Sissy's mother. "She wore her pink cambric. I gave her some of that cold mutton, with the sausage and pie. I made her take the umbrella, in case it should rain. She won't get home before nine. Jenny Severby went with her."

"They've got a letter from Severby. He ain't wounded much," said John absently. He was thinking about Sissy, and to himself he said: "One less."

He was glad Sissy was at the picnic, and yet he wished, too, that she were at home; an empty place made the table look so. He finished his pickle, and took another doughnut.

"I hain't had squshed pienough," announced Tommy at this juncture. This was a point upon which Tommy and his mother cherished differences of opinion, and a gentle domestic flurry celebrated the controversy. It was difficult even for his parents to conceive the inconceivable, so far as to believe that any boy *could* cry louder than Tommy. John ate on calmly; he was used to it, and Mary had a way with the child. He wondered sometimes which groggery he should have selected, if he had married a scolding wife. Simpson's had its advantages, but Joe's was farther from home. This was the deepest metaphysical speculation in which John True had ever gone adrift. He pursued it dreamily now, as Tommy, subsiding from agony to theology,

as so many wiser than Tommy had done before him, struck up again : —

“ My omeizzen Ye-ev-ing, my  
Resizzenere ;  
Ven wy shoulda ma-a-ma  
If twyalsypere ? ”

“ What is that boy singing ? ” asked his father.

“ Why, it ’s plain enough, I ’m sure,” said Mary, in a gently reproving tone. “ He says : —

‘ My home is in Heaven,  
My rest is not here ;  
Then why should I murmur  
If trials appear ? ’

It’s easy enough to understand the boy. He speaks very plain, I ’m sure he does. I think he ’s going to have a beautiful voice when he ’s old enough. Let’s send him to singing-school, John, sha’n’t we ? ”

“ I guess I ’ll go and get my smoke,” said John. But he came back in a moment, fumbling awkwardly in his pocket, whence he drew an abject-looking cinnamon rosebud, which Tommy had freely sat on more or less during the evening meal.

“ I meant to have put it in your gown before supper, Mary.” John came bashfully up, and held the flower between his thumb and little finger.

His wife said : “ You dear old thing ! ” for he did not often give her flowers. He was not one of those men. She put the rose in her bosom coquettishly, and nodded at him. A fine color flowed over her face. She felt ten years younger, and looked five. She began to sing, as she washed the dishes, on a full Baptist-choir soprano, merrily joining Tommy in the statement that his home was in Heaven, till it

seemed to become a general family joke, they were all in such spirits about it.

John listened to them as he sat smoking on the back door-steps. He looked over the potato-field ; the arms of the cherry-tree leaned around the corner of the house toward him ; the chickens came up and pecked confidingly at his boots, but the rooster disliked tobacco and kept at a distance. Tommy came out and strangled him from behind with two little green-checked arms. The child's kisses produced the effect of a vertigo upon the man. He got up to put away his pipe, and stood staggering.

His wife came out and talked about the cherries and the chickens. She hung upon him, and they wandered about the little yard and garden till the sun sank behind the meeting-house belfry, and the currant leaves looked no longer like thin gold, but like thick agate or lava, and drooped with dew. In the sky, purple forms, like banners, came up and on, and the mists in the valley moved solemnly, as if they had been thoughts. In the fading of the day the woman's face seemed to grow shrunken and desolate.

"You look thin," said John.

"I don't *feel* thin," said Mary.

It seemed she was not thinking about the sunset, but about the potatoes. She had many questions. Should they plant pink-eyes next year ? How did the new fertilizer affect the cabbages ? Might n't she have a fuchsia and three geraniums under the L window ? Tommy must have a swing on the cherry-tree. In the fall, where should we put Sissy's teeter-board ? She'd been promised one in Septem-



ber. And when should the chicken-house be painted red? And, John, could we get a rabbit for Tom? And, John, did Sissy grow so fast that we must cut her hair?

"Don't you think it's getting a little damp?" asked John.

He spoke in the high throat-voice his wife was used to when he had the toothache. She said:—

"What! that old wisdom at it again? Poor fellow!" and reached up to pat him upon the cheek before she took the boy in.

He watched them as they went. Tommy, half asleep, leaned heavily, tugging at his mother's bright calico dress, which in the dusk had faded to a gloomy color. Mary half lifted, half led the little fellow. The baby woke, and cried faintly from the dark house.

John True stood under the cherry-tree and stared after them. He did not smoke any more. He felt the delicate white blossoms falling to the ground around him.

He was a man to whom nothing had ever happened. The impossibility of change was like the remoteness of death. He tried to fix his mind upon the passing hour. He thought of little things. It occurred to him that he would go into the house and look at the green check on Tommy's apron.

The lamps were lighted before he got in, and he groped dizzily toward them through the heavy, sweet-scented night air, across the narrow yard. His wife glanced at him as he came in, but did not at the moment speak. She had brown eyes and brown hair, and always looked prettier by lamp-

light. She had put the cinnamon rose into her hair because the baby snatched at it.

John sat down on the hair-cloth sofa in the sitting-room while Tommy was being put to bed. He felt like a visitor in his own house. Tommy kissed him good-night hilariously, and said his prayers for Pupper in a metrical manner, closely resembling the tune of "Three Little Kittens," and replacing by an emphatic Amen the historic "basket of saw-aw-dust."

Then Sissy came home from the picnic. Sissy was a tall, bleached girl with freckles, and wore her hair in two long braids behind. She did not look like her mother or her father, but like a queer great-aunt who made an unfortunate marriage. It was necessary to talk a great deal about the picnic, and Sissy had lost the umbrella.

John remembered that he had not collected his mind by counting the squares on Tommy's apron, which had disappeared with Tommy; it seemed that a great opportunity was lost.

But Sissy too was tired, and would go to bed. When she came to say good-night, her father asked her how old she was, and Sissy told him she was eleven, and her mother said:—

"Why, John! what a funny question!" And John said nothing at all. And so, presently, Sissy too had gone to bed, and her mother went up with her; and John said he would finish his smoke.

He did not smoke, however, but stood in the sitting-room where they had left him. When he was quite alone, he stretched his arms with one mighty, pathetic gesture above his head. The awful power

of a human home was on him ; he felt as helpless before it as the child in the cradle. His soul shot out tendrils everywhere ; he could have clasped the tall rocking-chair, the baby's sock that had fallen beneath it, the old mat that stood before his wife's sewing-chair, the scraps of her work scattered about. Her voice and Sissy's came from the bedroom above. Tommy was singing himself to sleep with a droning sound : —

“ My ome — izzen Ye-ev-ing.”

“ *I'll bet the chap that wrote that never had one to his name anywheres else !* ” cried John True.

Mary came down-stairs. As she entered, she glanced at him, but said nothing.

She moved about with gentle bustle, picking up scraps of cloth and spools, and the children's play-things ; she drew the green paper shades, and smoothed the worn red table-cloth, and pulled her rocking-chair around away from the light.

“ Wy shoulda ma-a-ma ? ”

sang Tommy, and so sank into his first nap, from which he aroused but once to ejaculate —

“ Twyalsypere ! ”

in a firm voice, before silence settled for that summer night upon the cheap white house.

Mary True sat beside her husband in the quiet room ; she was run-and-back-stitching the seam on a red delaine dress for Sissy.

“ It's her fall dress,” she said, “ but I thought I'd begin. I made it over out of that one of mine — do you remember, John ? ”

“ I guess so,” said John, with a mighty effort of

the imagination. "It looks as if I'd seen some woman wear it. I guess I remember it, Mary."

"Why, *John*! It's the dress I had made up one wedding-day two years ago, to surprise you in. And, John! you kissed me three times extra in it the night I put it on, and said I looked younger than Clara Severby. I should think *even* a man would remember that!" with great contempt.

"Why, yes, I *said* I remembered it," replied John meekly. "Clara looks old," he went on, "since Severby — are you going to send Sissy to the High School, Mary?"

"I — have always thought we would educate Sissy," said Sissy's mother, speaking slowly. "And John, dear" —

"Well, Mary?"

"Don't you suppose" —

"Don't I suppose?"

"Don't you think we might, *somehow*, manage — other folks do that ain't better off than we are — don't you think we might — if I did n't have any new dresses, John, only the children's things — and if we did n't have much doctoring — don't you think we *might* send him to college?"

"Send who to college — Severby?"

"I *meant* Tommy," said Mary, hanging her brown head, "but I know it's" —

"Yes, Mary, it is," answered John in a deep voice. "The boy must work — like his father — he must help you — he must help us all. God must help us all."

He got up and paced the little room, shook off her hand; then, returning, lifted her work-worn fingers

with the courtliness of love, close to his set, strong lips.

The woman had dropped her sewing now. Sissy's red dress-waist fell to the floor. Her mother, after a moment's silence, picked it up, folded it methodically and laid it away for the night.

"I think I'll go see if the children are covered up," she said lightly. "It has changed to the east."

The rocker of her little sewing-chair creaked as she moved; Tommy half waked and called her; and, from the inner room, she could be heard hushing the stirring baby in inarticulate, beautiful, maternal polysyllables. The east wind drove in at the open front door, and sounds from the distant village, broken, stirring, and solemn, came in.

Mary came back soon enough, and they sat together and talked of many things. Her thoughts ran wild with the future that night: what trades the boys would like; how old Sissy should be when she married; whether he, John, would grow tired of her, Mary, when she grew old. They talked about a new oil-cloth in the entry and the prevention of profanity in a boy like Tom. They discussed the lining to the kitchen stove and the last lie that Sissy told. They considered the price of rump-steaks and whether, if John were a church-member, he would have family prayers. They talked of when he must have new shirts and how long they had been married. They criticised the old rooster and the new minister. They spoke of the pudding they would have to-morrow and the good they would have done if they had been rich people. They spoke of the last time they were cross to each other and of how they would love each other forty years to come.

John got himself through it all in a stern, soldierly fashion. He kept his hands clasped behind his head at first, and gave her his sad, straightforward eyes, regarding her with the pathetic reticence characteristic of certain men; his look seemed to lift her up as if she had been one of the children like Sissy or Tom, and to hold her to the heart of thoughts as unspoken as his pure and perfect love. It was as if this awful individuality of the purpose of a man stepped out like another being between the husband and the wife, and made three of them. She apprehended it before she spoke. She was not wise enough to put it into words, but she felt, from the bottom of her heart, and knew, from the limits of her understanding, that she had for the first time come up against that in the man's nature with which she, Mary, his wife, whom he had sworn to cherish till death did part them, could not, by might or right or love or longing, hope to intermeddle.

As they talked, her face blanched sadly; but she was not a crying woman; she looked steadily on straight before her. She had been sitting in the low rocker all this while without her work, her hands, in the rare and awkward idleness of a working-woman, crossed clumsily in her lap. She had not touched him.

But now, at last, she put out her fingers and slid them timidly into his. She rose then, and, still timidly, she gave him the other hand. For a moment so, she looked down at him.

"John," she said, "do you want to take me in your lap a minute?"

In the silence he held up his shaking arms. The



distant drum-beat from the village sounded out as she crept to him.

“John, do you — Oh, hush! hush! Oh, I *know* you love me! Oh, I won’t ask! I’ll never be so cruel. I’ll save you, dear — you shall not tell. Oh, my poor boy! my dear boy! I know you have enlisted. I knew it when you first came home!”

## II.

The crimson panorama was comfortably folded away at last from our sensitive sight. The disbanded armies and the disbanded lives had dispersed as best they might. The silken battle-flags, splashed and rent, were æsthetically draped in the State Houses, and still pointed out to rural visitors on a pleasant Saturday afternoon. The birds sang shrilly in the great cemeteries at Arlington, at Gettysburg, and the rest. The old uniform was cut over to make a coat for the boy. Men had learned to pass the red cap of the messenger without touching their own. Women had already dared to scold the saved soldier, for whose life they would have sold their souls. The crape was worn out, and the tears were dry. It was beginning to be too much to ask of one to follow the procession on Decoration Day. It was ten years after the war.

It was wearing to the end of a November day, and a poor sort of day even at that. The wind had blown from the east for forty-eight hours, and was rising still. The trees objected heavily to this fact with groaning bare boughs, and in these little suburban places there seemed to be a dismal superfluity of

trees. They stood about forlornly in rows, like veterans who were no longer wanted. Now that the elm and maple leaves lay crushing paralytically under foot, or whirled hysterically overhead and athwart through the gray air, of what use was all this gauntness of outline and tenacity of existence, except to drip into one's eyes and make the houses damp?

It was going to rain when it could make up its mind to. No one stayed out-of-doors who could help it. The pedestrians were few out here in these wide spaces. The afternoon drives were over. The fat horses had bowled the carriages away to the luxurious stables. Ladies prattled shivering within, and ordered the parlor-fire lighted. The gentlemen had come earlier, and crosser, than usual from their business. The lap-dogs sat in the bay-windows, occupying crimson cushions and wearing bows to match. The horse-car on the long single track made the chief sign of motion in the windy dusk, unless one noticed the newsboy or had a personal stake involved in the coming of the evening express. Even the leaves had the air of trying to get in-doors, and the whirls of dust wore a dejected look, as of objects dependent on private charity for shelter.

It was no night, it was no place, for a peddler, as anybody but a peddler would have known. The poor fellow who came toiling on behind the half-past five Scotch-plaid horse-car, which had stopped to let off the stout gentleman at the large, high-art green house that stood back from the street, looked as if he would have shown more discouragement if he had been more used to hope. He walked most wearily,

and as one observed him one might have seen that it was the weariness of disease, which differs from that of healthy fatigue with a kind of distinction that the well cannot perceive. He had a little bag or knapsack strapped across his shoulders in an easy way, as if they were well used to it; he bore it, indeed, with a certain grace. He had the figure of a man who would have walked erect if he had been well. He was tall and well put together. He had a pair of fine blue eyes, but these no comfortable person would have cared to examine, for fear that he should remember them; would have gone on perhaps, as the stout gentleman did, whistling down an uneasy sense that he had seen the saddest thing yet in the whole November landscape.

"I might try it myself," said the peddler, pausing before the high-art green house. That house was a novelty then, the daring freak of a young English architect. It attracted all manner of moths like this, by the sheer barbaric force of color. The people who lived there — Hathaway by name, though that is of small importance to us or the peddler — had observed it. Mrs. Hathaway complained that she could halve the number of beggars and other tramps by a coat of cool, gray paint — something after the manner of Ruskin, who doubtless had these social facts in view, in the promulgation of his architectural theories.

"I've tried most all sorts," said the peddler patiently, "the big and the little, yellow and white. I have n't tried a *green* house yet. There's a deal of yellow ochre in it. It's a very well painted house — unfashionable though. I might as well venture.

Unfashionable folks ain't so likely to have fashionable hearts ; nor their views about tape and needles ain't so stylish either," he added aloud, as he turned into the dusky avenue.

Of sane people, only the very solitary talk aloud. As he turned from the avenue to strike the little winding path that led to the back of the house, the great front door of the mansion opened, and several people came out. There were perhaps four ladies and two gentlemen. A carriage or two had now driven up, and stood waiting. The hostess herself followed her guests to the door, saying something about the Scotch-plaid car, which was overdue. They were all people of elegant dress and easy demeanor. They were talking earnestly among themselves, and lingered on the porch.

"I wonder," said a gray-headed gentleman with a classic profile and a bronchial cough, "if it would do to loan Michael Cavarini ten dollars?" The classic gentleman spoke timidly.

"We cannot be too firm, Mr. Wax," suggested Mrs. Hathaway, "although there must be exceptions to all theories. Do you not think Michael Cavarini has had time to become self-supporting? There is the wood-yard, and the snow-shoveling will soon come on."

"His visitor says he can't get into the wood-yard, you know," observed the youngest person present — a very young gentleman, who had a conscientious mustache.

"True," replied Mrs. Hathaway, "and snow-shoveling has not been a fruitful means of livelihood since April, poor fellow! Well, we must think

again. Don't you think it would do to continue his case at the next council ? ”

“ Unless I get more light on the subject before Tuesday,” said Mr. Wax earnestly, “ I shall vote for the loan. I might even advocate its being twenty-five dollars, and no interest.”

“ As to Mrs. O'Flaherty,” urged the very young gentleman, “ it seems to *me* we might give her a pair of shoes. I really don't see how she is to go out scrubbing — I think we decided she was to scrub on trial, did n't we ? — without shoes. Then she said she needed something flannel — I'm not clear what — some of the ladies may know. She said she preferred it red. I have been in great perplexity over Mrs. O'Flaherty. My mother offered me an old dress for her. Do you think it would demoralize her past redemption ? ”

The rest of the little company broke into merriment at this, and as the car came swinging round the corner they parted laughing, the ready, nervous laugh of people who have dwelt upon great responsibilities too long for their ease of heart.

“ There,” said one of the party, as they went down the avenue, “ there is one of them this moment, Mrs. Hathaway. Your theories are at your threshold. If they don't keep away from *you*, what hope is there for the age ? Of what use is it for us to lavish our souls and bodies on those problems when we can't keep beggars off from our own doors ? Why should we ” —

“ I'm no beggar,” said a sturdy voice from the uncertain shadow that the dusk was building by the servants' doors.

The little group stopped and stared at the peddler — all but the very young gentleman with the conscientious mustache, who ran to catch the plaid horse-car, and lost it; whereupon, I regret to say, he devoutly expressed the wish that he had never made the acquaintance of Mrs. O'Flaherty.

"What are you?" asked Mr. Wax, trying to speak sternly (he had a vague impression that the man had been impertinent), but not succeeding in the least.

"I'm a peddler," stoutly. "I've never taken charity from no man — yet."

"Very good. That is excellent. I hope you never will," said Mrs. Hathaway hastily. "You talk like a man."

"Anything would be better than to pauperize yourself," suggested a lady who did not smile. "Cold and hunger are not the worst things in the world."

"Marm," said the peddler, "did you ever try it?"

The four refined, benevolent, perplexed, and comfortable faces glanced hard for the moment at the peddler's sickly, shrinking one. He had a hunted look, glaring across the dark at them, where he stood apart.

"My horses are getting restless," said the lady who thought cold and hunger were not the worst things in the world, "and I must really go."

But Mr. Wax said he should stay and see a little more of this.

"Go round into the side porch," suggested Mrs. Hathaway to the peddler. "We will look at your things there."



The peddler did as he was bidden, walking slowly. He stood on the uppermost step but one, and looked up at the lady and gentleman who waited in the open doorway against a background of bright, indefinite interior, as delicate and mysterious to the man as the heart of a rose. His arrested attitude was not without significance; it was that of one who could not go up, and would not go down.

"What is your name?" began Mrs. Hathaway promptly.

"Tape and needles, pins and ruffling, lace and hairpins — oh! John True, marm."

"I will look at the needles. Do you make a comfortable living?"

"Sometimes," said the peddler, evasively.

"Have you a permit?" asked Mr. Wax, with the determination of a man resolved to say the proper thing.

"Sir? — Yes. Those are American pins, marm. I've got no English to-day."

"Have you sold much to-day, John True?"

"Not much to-day, nor yet yesterday," said John True, hesitating. "I got a breakfast for a couple of box-plaits and some pink tape."

"You look hungry," said Mr. Wax, with blunt compassion.

The peddler looked at the Committee of the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism. He did not speak. The stout gentleman had come out and joined them; he called Mrs. Hathaway "My dear." The pug had followed also, and stood airing his crimson ribbons with high personal reserve on the door-sill; he had the aspect of a sub-committee not

expected to give advice, but admitted to unfathomable confidence.

"We will have some supper," said the lady with vague kindness. Her thorough training as a social economist prevented her from saying, "I will give you a supper."

"Thank you, marm," said John True, "if the needles will pay for it."

"This is an excellent spirit, Mr. Wax," said Mrs. Hathaway. A child at this moment ran from somewhere and dashed at the stout gentleman's neck — plainly a boy, by his boisterous loving.

"Ah!" said the peddler, with a change of manner, "he's a pretty little fellow."

"Some of your own, perhaps?" asked the lady.

"Hush!" said Mr. Wax, who was a bachelor, "you — you hurt the man."

"Thank you, sir," said John True. There was an awkward silence. The peddler was the first to break it.

"I find it hard" — he fumbled weakly with an imitation Valenciennes ruffle, drawing it through and through his gaunt fingers — "I don't find it easy, yet, to talk about it all. I'd ought to by this time. My boy had the scarlet fever while I was in the war — him and the baby. They both died in one week. My wife wrote me about it. That and the war broke her all up. She kind of pined away. She didn't live long after I got home, herself. That's how it comes I haven't anybody. She was a good wife. My boy's name was Tommy. He was just the size of yours, sir — much them ways. My wife wanted him to go to college. I don't think she ever

thought he could die. I never thought of it myself till the letter came. I was n't so much acquainted with the baby ; but he was a cunning little thing. I suppose he would have grown up. My wife was very fond of him. My wife was a brave woman." He drew himself up. "She never asked me not to go — not once. I got wounded once or twice, and once my name got into the dead-list. It broke her up — I think it broke her up as much as the children. She said a woman had to sit at home and read the papers. She said a man did n't know. I got home unexpected one day. When I come in — Madam, if you are suited with the needles, I will go."

"Wait a little," said the lady gently ; "we would like to hear some more about you before you go. Perhaps you would like your supper first ?"

"If I've got to talk," answered the man after a silence, "I'd rather be over with it before I eat. But I don't want to be asked any more questions about *her* — nor yet the boy. I ain't in the habit of talking — about 'em. I ain't very well. It tires me. My breath don't come right."

"The man has asthma," said Mr. Wax in an undertone.

"Asthma and shakes," replied the soldier cheerfully, "and an old wound in the hip, and some other troubles that soldiers have. There's *sorts* enough if that would answer."

"Helen," said the stout gentleman, speaking for the first time, "bring this man in out of the cold, and order up his supper in the hall, would n't you ? It's warmer for us all in there. Mr. True, come in. We won't plague you about your family."

The peddler stepped in reluctantly to the great crimson-carpeted hall. He glanced at the engravings and statuary, and removed his hat, but stood uncertain.

"I'd rather eat below, sir, but I'll set a moment if you wish. I *am* tired." He sank back, panting, upon one of the tall carved chairs.

"Don't sell much, I take it," said Mr. Hathaway, with the directness of the business man, who had little or no time for philanthropy.

"Not much, sir — no. It's a poor business. I wouldn't be at it if I could get my pension. Folks don't *like* peddlers."

"But you must have had a trade," suggested Mrs. Hathaway, "and why can't you get your pension?"

"I was a house-painter, but that gives you the lead-colic, marm, if you ain't pretty tough to start with. I tried it at first, but the shakes come on, and I fell off the ladder one day. They wouldn't have me after that. Marm, I've tried *everything* — you needn't ask me. This is all I can get. I hoped I'd get my pension. I applied in '65. They say it's a clear claim. But it ain't come yet. I hope I'll hold out till it does. I've got a right to it, I think."

His gaunt blue eyes flashed out once — he glanced about the warm, luxurious place. It occurred to him at that moment that the lady might not have had all these things — and her live husband — and be able to send that boy to college, if it had not been for men like him. But he thought it would be impolite to tell her so. He was her company just now.

"Take all his things, Helen," said Mr. Hathaway

turning away abruptly, "and come to dinner when you can." The man made him uncomfortable. He almost wished he had not sent a substitute himself. His easy gray eyes fell before the staring blue ones of the peddler.

There was no end to the pension question if one got into it. Helen, thank fortune, had never been drawn into *that* yet. People had got tired of soldiers before she took up philanthropy. They were outworn, unfashionable long since. Government was supposed to look after *them*. There were a hundred other whims, now, for the occupation of elegant leisure and well-meaning consciences. Hear her now, with her beautiful persistence, going at that poor fellow!

"But surely, Mr. True, if you are a deserving man, you should have got your pension long before now. I do not understand this business. I have — been occupied in other — directions. I should wish to help you if I knew how. We owe a debt — we are under obligation to you."

She stopped suddenly, remembering what obligations her sheltered, happy life was under to this peddler of tape and needles, lace and hairpins. She was a young woman yet. She was of the generation that had sprung up since 1865. Her husband was older than herself. She had never picked lint or rolled bandages. She looked upon Memorial Day as a questionable popular festival, calculated to make drunkards, and teach the poor unthrifty habits. *She* had never searched a list of killed and wounded in the morning papers. She was able to hear military music with composure. She did not

have to lock herself away alone, with her hands pressed like the clods of the grave upon her ears, when a soldier's funeral passed the house. She could meet a blue uniform in the street without the heart-throb that tore the life, or the blinding mist in the eyes that darkened the face of the heavens and the earth. She did not have to get out of the room, when young people sang army songs, and wander about till they came calling and wondered why she was not there to play the waltzes. She was one of the blessed among women who had not lived the war.

"We are under obligations to you," repeated the gentle philanthropist, not without embarrassment.

"There's hundreds of thousands of us," said John True monotonously. "I had n't ought to wonder so much if I'm one of 'em. It's queer how folks always have a feeling of surprise at their own troubles; but I guess," brightly, "I'll get my pension come January." He closed his little valise and shifted it cheerfully across his shoulder. His breath came with a painful sound. "I've got one of those holes in the lungs," he said carelessly. He thrust his hand under his thin shirt up to the knuckles in a pitiful concavity, such as his disease sometimes wears out of the living bone and tissue. "It makes me stoop," he added, "and it's bad about breathing; but I kep' my arms and legs — and eyes. I thank you, marm, for buying so much stock of me. It will keep me a good while — it will keep me several days."

"Have you consulted no physician?" asked Mr. Wax, as John True moved to the door. A great



gust of the damp night swept in. The peddler coughed and shivered. It was beginning to rain.

"Oh, I have my quinine," said the soldier evasively. "There's nothing else for it."

"There are objections to medicating yourself with this drug and—risks," suggested Mr. Wax earnestly.

"Sir," said John True, "did you ever have the shakes under McClellan along the Potomac?"

"Well, well!" said Mr. Wax deprecatingly.

The pug was sniffing superciliously at the peddler's heels, as one who was constituted an advisory committee for the emergency, and must officially remind him that the open door would chill the house. The little boy, too, was calling his mother in to dinner. He could be seen through the open library door making darts at his father from behind, and strangling him with uproarious kisses.

"Go below for a good hot supper, and I should like to give you the address of our society," suggested Mrs. Hathaway thoughtfully. "It may serve you in some emergency. We make it a point to help honest people to be self-supporting. We have our industrial branches. I will write it for you—There. We do not give in charity, except in real extremities."

"I haven't fallen that far yet," said the soldier, lifting his head. He looked at the sky, but there were no stars—it was deadly dark. "I guess I'll get my pension in January," cheerfully. "I hope I'll hold out. I thank you, marm, for the supper. Next time I come around this way I'll bring some extra crimped hairpins for you. I have a kind in

a box with a lady on it in a pink gown. Generally I ask something extry for the box. I should like to have you have it to remember me by. I wished I had something in my stock that would please that little fellow. But it's all women's gear. Good-night, sir," to Mr. Wax, who held the door open and said nothing.

But the chairman of the committee of the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism, hastily excusing himself from his hostess and colleague in philanthropy, shut the door of the high-art green house, and followed the peddler down the piazza steps. The two stood for a moment in the now heavily falling rain.

"You have no umbrella," said the representative of the Extinction of Pauperism under his breath.

"Well, sir, no. I parted with mine one day for a — well, for a supper. I had n't had anything to eat, only a few blackberries that was pretty well dried with the drought, since the day before of a breakfast time. I have n't any umbrella, but I'll get under shelter in a place I know before long, now; thank you, sir."

"You must take mine," said Mr. Wax guiltily. "I insist upon it. And I wish — here — I — I beg your pardon," cried Mr. Wax, looking all around him with a scared air, "but I never enlisted myself. I had an invalid sister, and I — at any rate, I did n't. I do not enjoy it to see a soldier going about the State of Massachusetts in the condition you are in. I really do *not* enjoy it!" repeated Mr. Wax, wiping his forehead; "and if you won't look upon it as a charity — for we seldom give in charity, nor even as

a loan, for our loans, you know, are subject to the advisory committee — and, in fact, if you would be so good, Mr. True, as not to look upon it — officially, anyhow — but just to give one human being the privilege of putting some comforts, such as umbrellas and other necessities of life, into another human being's way," finished Mr. Wax wildly, "I should be infinitely grateful to you. As a civilian," added Mr. Wax, "who is under obligations to a soldier, I must say that I will *not* have you look upon this as a charity. It would be contrary to your excellent instincts; it would be contrary to all our principles; it would be — Good-night, sir," cried Mr. Wax severely, and, glancing about him with the air of one detected in a felony, the chairman of the committee of the Society for the Prevention of Pauperism tucked a fat bill into the peddler's thin hand, and fled for his life.

### III.

The nation had come up like a convalescent from a fever, not without a certain incredulity of the disease which it had survived. The public credit was sturdy. The reduction of the war debt had become one of the financial wonders of the world. The business outlook was clear. So long as England ate our beef, and our superfluous grain went as ballast to the merchantmen, what would we? Since the great Western crops were assured, the chinch-bug to be disposed of by kerosene and milk (one could hardly respect even a chinch-bug who refused to surrender life upon that diet), the forest fires out, the floods

down, and the Hutchison and Saint Gray Railroad managed by Boston capital, who could complain? If the banking system is safe, and the kindergarten semi-annual has subscribers; if pencil-lined summer silk is fifty cents a yard, the Prohibitory law defeated, the three-and-a-half per cents afloat, and we have a country week for sick babies, "what can we want besides?" A chorus of fifty million voices adopts this national anthem from the hymn-book, and chants piously.

It is the day when we look in the morning papers for the score of the last national base-ball match. It is the day when we thrill over the accident to the stroke of the inter-collegiate regatta. It is the day when we play lawn tennis with the ladies. It is the time when all the ardor of our soul is flung into the cut of our landau; when we discuss the bang on the tails of our horses; when we camp out in the Yellowstone on an August vacation, and our wives pray for us as for men in mortal peril. It is the time when we give thirty thousand dollars for a French painting; when we agonize over the "punkin"-colored frieze claimed as old gold upon our summer villas; when we amuse ourselves chasing what we call a fox, at the watering-place affecting imported fashions and humanities; when the crack in the faience vase stirs our natures to their depths. It is the day when gamboge yellow china monsters, costing a hundred dollars a pair, sit over against our thresholds in the front hall. It is the day when we give five hundred for a lap-dog, and three dollars a visit for the calls of the dog-doctor. It is the day when we have adapted social science to the impulses

of the heart. It is the day when we know to a copper how much it is right to give our starving sister. It is the day when we are generous to a fault with our thoughts, with our time, with our nerve, with our privacy, with all the sweet and sacred resources which have a value to human need, beside which, indeed, mere money may be a slight and chilly contribution. It is the day when we find ourselves proud of the extent to which we have become our brother's keeper. It is the day of harbor excursions, and women's prisons; of the society for educating you at home, and the great firm that takes you from behind its counter to send you abroad. It is the day of the flower charity and rides for invalids. It is the day when we stubbornly investigate insane hospitals, and when women on the State Boards of Charity discover that female convicts have not been supplied with nightgowns. It is the day when the merciful executioner of our superannuated dogs or horses gives a new trade to society and a new humanity to life. It is the day when the law takes a child away from a drunken parent, and a man may be arrested if he kicks a donkey. It is the day when our navy consists of fourteen unarmored cruisers and twelve old-fashioned monitors. It is the day when the applications for pensions are coming in at the rate of three thousand a month. It is the day when two hundred thousand pension claims remain unsettled. It is the day when over one hundred Massachusetts soldiers are found in almshouses. It is twenty years after the war.

. . . . .

On a hot, bright day in May, 1882, the physician

in charge of the State Almshouse at Tewksbury received a summons to attend a sick pauper as promptly as possible. It was not the first call; the man had troubled him before, but of late had kept more quiet. At one time there had been talk of sending him to the insane wing, but for this reason and that, it had never been done. The doctor went to the pauper's bedside with a dubious expression, as one who distrusts his own leniency.

The patient was the last in the long row in the men's ward. His cot came up blankly against the wall. Some of the men had a window.

"I get tired of the wall," said the patient abruptly, as the physician entered.

"It's always something, you know, True," answered the doctor carelessly. "Well, how is it to-day? Choking again?"

"It's *always* choking, Doctor," patiently, "but it's the cannon in my head I mind the most to-day. There's flashing and firing enough to blow Lee into eternity. Off and on I feel shells — then they bust and scatter down my backbone. Seems I was blown up nigh all night. Jiggs says I kep' him awake. I think very like. I thought he was Beauregard, till it come sun-up. But I had n't nothin' to fling at him, only the pillow, and I ain't strong enough to fling the pillow. You need n't find fault; I laid still, Doctor. It was hard not to go at 'em, but I kep' still. I'm better to-day, Doctor — if you could muzzle them cannon."

"Oh, yes, I'll muzzle the cannon," said the physician lightly. He poured a teaspoonful from a vial which was labeled *Bromide Potass*.



"You *can't* muzzle 'em!" cried the patient contemptuously, "and you know you can't. I ain't a lunny — yet, nor I ain't a born fool. That sort of talk don't help a man in his senses. We used to have a doctor to home I'd like to see. My wife was very fond of that doctor. He understood my constitution, she said. *He'd* know whether I was dying or not. I never thought I'd come to a poor-house doctor."

"Dying fiddlesticks!" retorted the doctor good-humoredly; but he took in the man, soul and body, at one long glance, before he left him. The eye of an anxious physician is like a sharpshooter.

"Take the medicine, and let the cannon roar, if they will, True. They won't hurt anybody. I'll be back if you don't feel easier."

"I fought in fifteen battles, Doctor!" the patient cried after him — his voice reëchoed through the long, gaunt room — "I fought in fifteen battles. I was at Fair Oaks, and Malvern Hills, and Bull Run, and Antietam, and — oh, I've forgotten the rest. I was wounded twice. Once I got on the dead-list, and my wife read it in the papers. I was — look here, I never told you before. I don't often speak of it. I fought the war out; I did n't talk about it while I was peddlin'; I was afraid folks would say I was tradin' on my miseries. You know you could n't be the same man after all them years if you was to try. I did the best I could at peddlin'. I never thought I'd come to Tewksbury — I never *thought* of it!"

His voice rose to a kind of wail, which was the worst thing in the world for the paupers. Some one

ordered him sharply to keep still. The doctor went down to discuss the patient with the superintendent; it was not a case exactly for the State visitors who were coming any day now; yet it seemed hard to turn him into the asylum.

"He's only quinine-crazy; it is n't like the genuine thing, you know. I don't incline to disturb him; he's a pretty sick man. He takes the whole business hard. He was n't cut out for a pauper — the more 's the pity."

"Look here, True," said Jiggs, after the doctor had gone, "I'm sorry for ye, upon my word. I'd give ye somethin' to fling at me if I had it. I'm nothin' but a dummed fool that drank himself into this, but by the Lord Harry, if I'd fit for my country — too drunk; they would n't have me — I should call this a dummed shame. Be as crazy as you like, for all me — *I* won't complain of ye."

"Thank you, Jiggs," said the sick man patiently. He fell silent after this; so silent that they thought him much improved. He turned over on his little cot with his face to the great white wall, and dropped into a stupor, half doze, half day-dream, through which his thoughts stirred with a sluggish fear, like lost things that dared not move lest they should get farther still astray. He had always had these sullen times since he had been at Tewksbury. He had been there over two years. They had found him a tractable pauper; helpless with malaria and asthma, and his other ails; deranged at times with the over-use of quinine — a poisoned wreck. His fine blue eyes were hollow, and his lips livid. He was no longer a pleasant-looking fellow. One won-

dered what this defender of his country might be thinking of, lying there with his face to the poor-house wall. His lost life? His last battle? More probably his next dose. He muttered a good deal and stared about. He had quite outlived his own romance (a pitiable fate for the most attractive of us), and no longer appealed to any but the most keenly imaginative sensibilities.

Some one spoke to him softly, as he lay there stupidly enough, that hot June day. At first he thought it was the robin that sang afternoons on the tree that grew across the street on the other side of the poor-house; but after a moment's attention he perceived that it was the voice of a woman. When he turned, he saw that several people were by his bedside, some gentlemen and this lady. He made a sign to intimate that he had seen her before, and that he welcomed her.

"I have often thought of you," said Mrs. Hathaway, "but I had never expected to find you *here*. My duties bring me here to observe the condition of the inmates. I am sorry to find you one of them."

"I want to speak to that man," said John True faintly. He pointed to Mr. Wax, who shrank a little in the background. The gentleman advanced, and leaned over the cot.

"I won't tell of you," whispered the pauper.

"Don't," sighed Mr. Wax.

"But it did a heap for me, sir. I got boots and flannels come winter. It kep' me in comforts, till you seemed to me, as I thought on you, most like own folks, sir. But I never told on you."

"I'm much obliged to you," said Mr. Wax, cough-

ing heavily. His bronchial condition explained a great deal of surplus emotion that a philanthropist must find inconvenient.

"I am very sorry to find you here," repeated Mrs. Hathaway gently. "We will hope soon to—to have you self-supporting and happy." She looked vaguely about; then suddenly her fine eyes filled. The peddler was greatly changed. She was not used to sick people, but she began to see that he looked very ill.

"He's crazy as a coot," volunteered the amiable Jiggs from the next cot; "but I let him fling pillows at me," complacently. "I'm nothin' but a dummed drunkard myself."

"You're an excellent fellow," said Mr. Wax helplessly.

"Tell us," urged Mrs. Hathaway, "how you came here, Mr. True, can't you? I am so very sorry. I have a better place for you, I think. I see you are not able to work at present. We are establishing a home"—

"It takes a pensionable status to get into hospitals," interrupted John True. "They would n't have me—I've never got my pension yet. Something was always the matter. I thought I'd get it come January when I was to your house, but it was always something. Last of all, the surgeon he up and died. I had to have his testimony as to what ailed me at the time of my discharge. We got most all the other witnesses—one of 'em he'd cleared out to Indiany after a divorce, and it took all that time to captur' *him*—then this feller had to go and die. They said my claim warn't good for nothin' without the

surgeon's testimony. That clean discouraged me," added the soldier. "I'd been in fifteen battles! I'd been wounded twice! I fought in Fair Oaks, and Malvern Hills, and Bull Run, and Antietam, and — oh, seems to me if there was n't so many folks round I could remember the rest." He looked wildly about, panting.

"I hoped that sedative would work better," said the doctor, who had joined the group.

"But this is not to be a national hospital," persisted Mrs. Hathaway. "It is to be a State affair, where you will not have to wait for anything. There is to be as little red tape as possible. I have become very much interested in it — I am one of the committee. I confess I think it is rather late, but better late than never. We must get you into it, Mr. True."

"I don't know nothing about it," said the pauper apathetically.

"We will speak to the superintendent at once," urged the lady nervously. "We will have you made comfortable there for the rest of your days."

"Thank you, marm; but it's too late for that."

The soldier turned his face to the wall. He was tired of all these fine people. He had no faith in their homes and hospitals. It would be like the pension.

"There'll be sure to be something the matter. You'll see, they won't let me in. They'll find reasons agin it. They won't want me. I don't know why. It ain't because I did n't fight. It ain't because I was n't wounded. It ain't because I was n't honorably discharged. It ain't because I ain't sick. . . . Lord! I never thought I'd come to the poor-house!

I never *thought* of it! I've been here two years and three months, and I ain't dead yet. . . . Lord, how I took on at first! I've got used to it now."

"What *made* you come at the last?" some one asked him gently.

"They took me, sir. They said I was starving. The selectmen found me in a cornfield of a November night. I was n't very well. It was in a town where I had n't sold much of anything."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Hathaway, restraining herself with much emotion, "we will take you out of the poor-house. We will come back for you next week."

"Marm," said the pauper, "I ain't an object of interest for a lady now. I would n't trouble yourself if I was you."

He turned his face to the wall again, and said no more to them. Only, as the gentlemen passed out of the ward, he beckoned once, and Mr. Wax returned and asked his pleasure.

"Will this be a *real* thing, this place you tell of?" asked the pauper. "No play-work, an orderly, and a flag, and other soldiers? I'd like to die under a roof where the flag belonged, if I could as well as not. It *would* be something not to *die* in the poor-house, would n't it, sir?"

. . . . .

They had moved him, although he was very weak. It was thought best, at the last moment, to make the experiment, and they bore him with what tenderness they might, on the little journey from Tewksbury to Chelsea, and so through the welcome dashes of the sea-winds up the Powder-Horn Hill, and into the home which Massachusetts had provided for her



scattered heroes. It was an exceedingly hot day, and as he got out of the carriage, which he tried to do without assistance, he turned his face to the salt breeze and looked pathetically about.

"It's cooler here than it was in Tewksbury," he said. "I've nothing against 'em at Tewksbury; but it was a hot place for sick folks."

Then, glancing up the height of the building, his gaunt, dull face flashed fire.

"Oh, there's the Flag! See! How she flies! Ain't she a living beauty! Oh, I'm glad to get under the Flag!"

He made the military salute gravely, then bared his head, his face upturned to the solemn symbol for which he had sacrificed youth, health, home, hope, and life: not much, to be sure, but this obscure man gave what he had. We may remember it, now and then, although we are truly busied about many other things. Thirty years are a generation. Half of the men who sent him forth are in their graves. We who remain have more modern subjects of thought and care than these poor wrecks, who have sifted through the strain of broken business habits, incurable disease, growing age, and increasing friendlessness. You who have sprung up since the rank and file were our hope and our glory, to whose happy young ears a drum-tap has no more solemn meaning than a serenade, and to whose fancy a soldier presents the form of the sleek Cadet disporting himself at Magnolia, or the useful messenger who carries your invitations—it is our fault if we have suffered you to forget that sacred debt whose bonds bear interest unto the third and fourth generation of them

that owe it, and shall reflect the military quality of loyalty upon thousands of them that honor it and reverence its obligations.

These were our trust ; how fare they at our hands ?

Our saviors then ; are they our heroes now ?

John True went into the Soldiers' Home quietly ; they helped him on either side, for the outbreak of life with which he had greeted the flag passed quickly, and he moved and breathed with difficulty.

Comrades saluted him as he crossed the threshold, and the "orderly," about whom he had asked, was there. They took him to the place assigned him. Its coolness, size, and comfort seemed to confuse him.

"These are your quarters," said the orderly.

"Eh ? Not — here ?"

"Yes, *these* are your quarters."

"But this must be officers' quarters. I was n't an officer."

"No ; these are *your* quarters."

The pauper soldier began to tremble, looked appealingly about — made as if he would entreat to be left alone ; then : —

"My God ! My *God* !" he cried aloud, and sank down, sobbing mightily before them all.

. . . . .

He lingered for a little while, not in great pain, and with so much comfort that they had at first hopes of his regaining life. He knew better than this himself, but he did not try to undeceive them. He lay quietly, sleeping a good deal, and smiling upon all who spoke to him. He often said : —

"Oh, I am so comfortable, so comfortable !"

Sometimes he told the boys that he never *thought* he should have come to the poor-house; and once he said again that it was a good deal to die with the flag over your head.

One day he called the orderly and said:—

“I forgot to tell those gentlemen why my daughter could n’t support me. I had a daughter, but she married at sixteen—that’s why. Sissy married a drunkard. He was a Dogberry fellow—his father drank before him. They’re out West somewhere, but I have n’t heard from her for a long spell. Sissy could n’t do the first thing for me. It would have been better for Sissy if she had had the scarlet fever when the boys did—but she lived instead.”

At another time he said, with some anxiety:—

“I forgot to ask that lady whether she ever got the extry box of hairpins I owed her for my supper. I sent it by another peddler I knew. It had a picture on the cover—it was a pretty box. I wish I’d asked her.”

It was noticeable that, as he failed, the more unpleasant aspects of his appearance gave place to a certain touching refinement, which might have been native to the man. As death advanced, the most painful marks of disease retreated. Fire returned to his fine blue eye. That weak dropping of the under lip fell into firmer lines. The muscles of his face began to move with a kind of precision, like men on duty under clear orders. The vacillation of pauperism departed from the soldier’s face in those last days. He spoke less and less; when he did, it was usually to say something about Mary, and some one asked him one day if Mary was his wife. He nodded

silently. He did not feel that he cared to talk about her to these strange men.

He thought of her—it seemed to him that he thought of her all the time. It was as if he had forgotten everything while he was in the poor-house. Now, it was like getting home again, after these twenty years.

Whether adream or awake—who should say that has not himself come to that haze which separates the facts of this which we call life from the mysteries of that which we name death?—he experienced much that had gone from his memory, leaving a blankness like that which rests in one's mind upon the lives of other men.

He remembered the row of holes perforated in the brown straw hat that he hung up in the entry the day he had enlisted. There was a little tin horse under foot, and he hit it, so it trundled away with a tinkling sound. There was a rag mat in the entry; it had blue roses, and one of the petals was worn, and pieced out with black alpaca. As he looked down at it, fumbling and delaying, dreading to tell her as he had never once since dreaded death when under fire, the child from within piped out shrilly:—

“My omeizzen Ye-ev-ing, my  
Resizzenere;  
Ven wy shoulda ma-a-ma  
If twyalsypere?”

And Mary was hurt because he went to wash himself without first kissing her. But he was so covered with red paint! He had been painting a red house—Seth Grimace's house.

They had doughnuts and hash for supper, and Sissy was not there. Sissy was at the picnic: she had the umbrella, lest it should rain, and was coming home with Jenny Severby. Sissy looked like her great-aunt who married a dissipated fellow. Poor Sissy! But Tommy crushed the cinnamon rose in his father's pocket, leaning so close against him at supper-table. . . . How she looks with the rose in her bosom — pretty! The baby pulled at it, and she put it in her hair. That was more becoming. Mary was always neat.

See! we go out into the garden after tea to walk. He throws away the pipe, and the rooster objects to tobacco; that pleases Tommy, strangling him with kisses from behind. Tommy has on a green-checked gingham apron. Let us count the checks to steady a man's mind against this thing he has to do, that is so much worse than the deadliest battle of them all, though he fought the war out, and was taken out of Tewksbury poor-house before he died. There are the currant-bushes; the cherry-tree is in blossom, and the flowers fall like snow. There are the cabbages, in the southwest corner, doing well. The sun is setting. Where shall we put Sissy's teeter-board? Shall Tommy have a rabbit? Yes, Mary, have your geraniums, my girl, anywhere you like. She hangs upon his arm now, leaning toward him; puts up her hand. Oh, how soft it is! There were only men — men out there. In all these years, Mary, I have never *touched* another woman — not even her hands. You never need be jealous in your grave, my girl. . . . I'll tell you when we get into the house. Not yet! not just yet! Give me a few moments' time!

I can't tell you this minute! . . . "I'm choking! — doctor! — sir, excuse me. I have made you trouble! I was thinking about another matter." . . .

The baby cried and she went in. I think I'll put it off. I will not tell her to-night. I had rather get a little stronger before I tell my wife I have enlisted. . . . That was just like her! To spare me — everything. She always did. But I would have told her if she'd waited a little longer. When I felt better I'd have told her. Oh, my girl, come here! Come here!

I have n't held no other woman in my arms, Mary, — and it's fourteen years since she died. Come here, and let us talk it over, if we can. . . . I say, boys, do you hear that? No? Oh, no. I see — it is some music that I heard. My little boy used to sing. This is the hymn. Why, I hear it: —

"My home is in Heaven."

Don't hear it, boys, none of you?

"My home is in Heaven,  
My rest is not here."

I can hear it very plain. We did n't get much home here, did we, boys? Broke up somehow — upset, seems to me — come to an end before its time. I had a pleasant home before the war.

"Home is in Heaven!"

Well, maybe — I would n't undertake to say; but it's asking a good deal of folks . . . to wait . . . so long.

. . . . .



Ready ! Aim ! Fire ! . . . Fair Oaks ! — Malvern Hill ! — Bull Run ! — Antietam ! Give it to 'em, boys ! give it to 'em ! Look at the Flag and think of your folks at home ! Shall we give our lives for nothing ? Aim low, boys ! Government will look after ye, don't ye fear ! Old Massachusetts won't allow us to suffer ! Each mortal man of us has got the promise of the United States of America to care for him and his'n if he drops ! Let 'em have it, boys ! Hurrah for the old Flag ! *Fair Oaks ! — Malvern Hill ! — Bull Run ! — Antietam !*

They went swiftly to his bedside, and held him to the strong, salt air. They spoke affectionately. There was little to say. Some one prayed aloud, but it was doubtful if he heard. He stretched his arms out with a gesture of infinite tenderness, and to the comrade nearest who supported him he said : —

“I've got my discharge, old fellow, and *now* I'm going home to see my wife. I almost dares n't, for she is n't very strong. Do you think it will be too much for her — so sudden — when she — sees me coming in ?”

## THE REVEREND MALACHI MATTHEW.

ONE chilly November day, toward five o'clock in the afternoon, a crowd of people poured from the First Church of Pepperville. The deacons were all out; the Sewing Society was there in force; the Dorcas Relief was thoroughly represented; the Town Missionaries were every one of them present; the Sunday-school teachers were on the ground almost *en masse*; the officers of the Ancient and Honorable Experiment for the Suppression of Intemperance were, to a man and a woman, on the spot; scarcely a church member in good and regular standing could be found who had absented himself from this occasion. In fact, sundry persons of doubtful, if irregular, standing in the First Church — not to mention a sprinkling of the world's people, including two reporters, a horse-jockey, one editor, some mill-girls out on a strike, a down-town bar-keeper, and a drunkard — were in the meeting-house that afternoon.

It was a white meeting-house with green blinds. The blinds were taken off in the winter, to save the paint. This economical process being under way, but as yet incomplete at the time we refer to, the church presented to the irreverent somewhat the aspect of the historic personage well known to the nursery, who appeared in public with "one shoe off and one shoe on." In fact, the youngest son of the oldest

deacon had disgraced himself and the family by distinctly singing, on a high key, outside the graveyard windows, in full hearing of the audience, this very refrain, with the classic addition about my son John, with which we are all familiar.

There were two air-tight stoves in the meeting-house, with black funnels, as long and as narrow as theology, running the length of the building. There were fires in both these stoves. All the windows were closed. The double windows, however, as if to furnish the casuistical mind with, at least, one proof of the benevolence of the Creator, were not yet on. Ventilators, the First Church would have you understand, were not in vogue when the First Church was built. It had yet to be learned that the apostles used ventilators, or that the early Fathers were dependent upon oxygen. Nothing so fresh as fresh air need be expected of Pepperville First Church and Society. We were conservative and cautious. If carbonic acid gas was good enough for our sainted ancestors, it was good enough for us. If they raised Christians on it, why could not we?

Besides, the senior deacon had to wear a skull-cap, as it was; two of the pillars were bald, but would n't own it; the superintendent's wife was of what is known in Pepperville as "a chilly disposition," and the heaviest pew-owner kept his own domestic thermometer at 82°.

The exercises in the church on this November day (it was a Tuesday of which I speak) had begun at nine o'clock in the morning. There had been an interval of an hour for a cold collation in the vestry, between twelve and one. The "performance" (as

the bar-tender called it, but was corrected by the horse-jockey, who preferred *circus*) had begun again at one. For seven mortal hours all Pepperville, in its best clothes, had sat between those two air-tights, anxious, intent, intense. It was now five o'clock, and Pepperville was let loose.

There were the young men, the very young men, the boys, awkwardly adorning the long flight of wooden steps which they gazed at sadly, as those who were prevented by force of public opinion from whittling. There were the young men comparing keen, alert young impressions; nodding sharply; laughing, not always pleasantly; receptive as moss is to a northeaster; growing as silently as the young oak; the future fathers of the great church or future victims of the great world, swarming in and out of Pepperville meeting-house in business hours, as if they had a President to elect, or a felon to try, or a race to see.

There were the women, oh! the women! grave and gay, saint and sinner, maid and matron, black silk and alpaca, in groups, in twos, alone, manned and manless, chattering, silent, whispering, tearful, giggling, stern. O my sisters, to whom the sweetness and light of the earth are intrusted, what monster or what marvel came ye out for to see, that ye sit seven hours idle here on ironing-day?

There were the pillars — Heaven guide the pillars! — the solid, tax-paying, anxious brethren, with the furrowed brows, with the bent shoulders, with the respectable overcoats, with the whole Denomination at their backs, not to say at their heels. They came next; they walked decorously and spoke under

breath, as at a funeral; they conversed confidentially with the important men who constituted the rear-guard of this agitated army.

These important men were strangers chiefly, the guests of Pepperville and of the First Church; better looking than the deacons, better dressed than the pillars, used better grammar than the members; clearly an imported article, but clerical, wholly. This rearguard composed a familiar and fearful body known in ecclesiastical communities as a "counsel," a "consul," a "caounsl," or even as a council.

This Council, which had met (on ironing-day, as might have been expected of the sex) to honor Pepperville by its presence and advice, at five o'clock that afternoon presented a grave appearance.

Its brow was dark, its eyes were bright, its lips compressed, its voice severe. Now and then it slipped up on the lifelong ministerial habit of joking, and forgot itself; but for the most part it remembered itself very well, and comported itself with the gloom which was evidently felt to hang over the occasion.

It discoursed plaintively, in low tones, as it joggled slowly down the aisle behind the dispersing crowd. Occasionally it wiped a furtive eye. Sometimes it clenched a sacred hand. Whether it was a council in affliction or a council on the war-path was a question which a neutral observer would have not been able immediately to decide; but that it was no common council, met under no common circumstances, was not to be doubted.

Slowly out of the First Church, down between the air-tights, out of the red-hot audience-room, through

the draughty, wheezy little entry, down the wooden steps, out of the carbonic acid gas into the fresh air, wriggled all Pepperville as best it might, — the maids, the matrons, the youths, the deacons, the pillars, the rumseller, the reporter, the horse-jockey, the mill-girls, and the drunkard; and the Council solemnly bringing up their rear, — as if to guide a flock of steers that had been driven into a narrow street, got frightened by a dog, and were jumping fences. As the crowd reached the air, the hum of voices rose to something intense. Pepperville was in subdued hysterics.

At a wide distance from the gesticulating, arguing, angry crowd, far behind the Council, far behind the deacons, and out of the way of everybody, there stole silently down the fast-darkening aisle the object of this mad excitement.

It was a tall, young man; a very young man. His hair was light and long; his arm was long and lank; he stooped; his best coat was shiny on the seams. He was very pale and had a scared look. He walked weakly and tottered once or twice.

He was (or would have been) the Reverend Malachi Matthew.

He was the pastor (non-elect) of the First Church in Pepperville. The poor young man was not "sound." The Council had refused to ordain him.

As he crawled feeling his way down the aisle, a woman crept out of one of the pews. It was now almost dark where she sat. She was a little woman. She wore a black alpaca suit and straw bonnet, and a pair of new kid gloves, too large for hands plainly unused to them. She was a very gentle, rather a



pretty little woman, and she crept up to him with a silent gesture of comfort.

"Well, Mary?" said the poor young man.

"Never mind, dear," said Mary.

She put her arm through his and closed her two hands together over it.

"I had to be honest, Mary. I could n't help it. Could I?"

"I did n't understand it all," sobbed Mary; "but I am sure you were right."

Both were thinking what neither dared to say, as they walked, a little set apart from the others, down the broad aisle together, through the gathering gloom of the fast-emptying church. What next?

Three years in the academy, four at college, two teaching school, three in the seminary; all he had, long since gone; all he could borrow wellnigh taken; every nerve of soul and body strained to hold out till the first call; in debt and in doubt and in disgrace — What next?

Married just out of college, when they thought he would teach a high school for life; drawn by the morbid New England conscience into the ministry "from a sense of Christian duty;" fighting his way, with a wife and three babies about him, inch by inch through the theological school; counting the months, adjusting the days to a dime's expenses more or less, till he should be a man again and free to go to work — for this; for *this*!

They had lived it all over in the space of time it took them to crawl down that broad aisle from the pulpit platform to the wheezy entry — those years in the little tenements, such as were reserved for the

washwomen and the poor students in the seminary town; where he studied with cotton in his ears, to deaden the sound of the baby's crying; the years when they went without meats and fires and flannels and doctors and books, and when he preached in mission churches for two dollars and a half a Sunday once in a while; those years when they had planned and contrived and given each other slow drops of precious courage, and hungered and shivered and sickened and never despaired — "for Christ's sake," they called it; to "preach the Gospel," they used to say — those years when they had sat together spending over and again the first quarter's salary from "their parish" that was to be; so much, first, for the debt; so much for an encyclopædia; this for a coat for him to preach in; that for a winter cloak for her to hear him in, since it would never do for a minister's wife to wear the blanket shawl; that, perhaps, for a baby-carriage, to save her strength. Oh! those years.

And now, what next?

They only clung to each other; there was nothing to say. Once he patted her hand in the dark, when it closed about his shaking arm.

Pepperville, on the church-steps and out in the keen November air, surged to and fro.

Poor little Mr. Malachi Matthew had doubts as to the final and eternal disposition of the impenitent, immediately upon the incident of death. He had been man enough to say so. For seven mortal hours this modest young fellow, who desired to preach the gospel of Christ, had been badgered and cross-questioned, with his whole history of self-denial behind him and professional ruin before him,

his wife watching him from the front pew, his babies and his creditors awaiting him. He had been raked fore and aft by all the doctrines that had a lodgment in all the heads of all the Council, — Predestination, Justification, Foreknowledge Absolute, Total Depravity, the Trinity, Vicarious Atonement, Verbal and Plenary Inspiration, Regeneration, Sanctification, and Botheration, — and he had come out of them all like a scholar and a Puritan, with a clear head, good sense, and the calm, dogmatic assurance to which he had been trained. Some of the questions which were asked him were of interest as ecclesiastical curiosities: “Did the Son exist coördinate with and yet subordinate to the Father?” “Were the three Persons in the Trinity separate as qualities, or as natures?” “Was the first sin of a child an infinite fact requiring an infinite punishment and involving an infinite atonement?” “Did an impenitent person ever pray?” “Could a man become regenerate without waiting for the compelling action of the Holy Spirit?” “Were the audience in Pepperville First Church responsible for the guilt of Adam?”

So far the candidate triumphantly remained, hopping about in the theological sieve. Up to that point they could not strain him through. He was well versed in all these important particulars. He had the tongue of the ready. So far as these vital matters went, he was fully qualified to preach the gospel of the Nazarene. Nobody put to him any less burning questions. Nobody asked him for his views on the great modern theories about pauperism or intemperance. No one wanted to know how he

thought a Christian minister ought to treat a beggar, or cure a drunkard, or save a castaway.

Not one of these pious and learned gentlemen had inquired what he would do with a young forger; how he would manage a tempted girl; how he would handle a dissipated boy; how he would inculcate purity among little children; how he would treat a pardoned prisoner; what were his views on the relation of working-people to their employers; how he would amuse the young people of his parish on winter evenings; how he should treat spiritualism, politics, the great charities, the refining arts, and domestic duties in his pulpit.

At length, as the subject of Eschatology comes last on the theological betting-list, poor young Mr. Malachi Matthew reached the point where he missed his "Reverend" and his parish, and where Pepper-ville began to surge. Did the candidate believe in the doctrine of an Everlasting Punishment? Did he explicitly hold that the impenitent are damned at death, without further or second probation, and that opportunity for salvation ends with this life?

The candidate gazed at the lynx-eyed Council, glanced at the breathless audience (his first people, who had chosen and loved him), looked once at his wife, thought of his babies, thought of his creditors — hesitated for the space of one of those conflicts an instant broad, but deep as eternity, in which young preachers have sold their souls, — then manfully held up his head, and, in a modest but distinct voice, said he did not know.

Then the hounds were let loose upon him. This was at eleven o'clock in the morning. From midday

till twilight the keener heresy-hunters, in a Council famed for its Orthodoxy, chased the poor fellow hither and yon. He would not lie. He really did not know. He felt it to be possible that the limits of the Almighty's loving-kindness might exceed the wisdom of even the soundest theological education. He experienced doubt as to his own fitness, at his present age and stage of training, to pass final judgment upon a matter of such fundamental gravity, and one upon which the wise and devout were at present more than usually in divergence of opinion. He even admitted that he thought it possible that death did not finally damn every unready, sinful soul that appeared before its Eternal Father for judgment. He had a formula of his own, poor fellow, by which he had expected to give ecclesiastical satisfaction; but they muddled it all out of him or rolled it away from under him, like the mule on which we hang horse-thieves in our good Western States, and so left him to his professional death. He met it quietly — neither hedged, nor equivocated, nor retracted; and the Council dissolved, leaving him branded as a heretic, without a pulpit, and the First Church in an uproar, without a pastor.

Now, it so chanced that nothing worse than this, short of eternal damnation itself, could well have happened to Pepperville First Church and Society. Their last pastor, a man beloved by many and respected by all, had resigned, accused of unsoundness by a faction in the parish. For two years before he left them, Pepperville had been torn from end to end by the Nature of — I think it was Predestination. For two years thereafter the parish had been

pastorless, searching the ecclesiastical battle-field for a talented, eloquent, healthy, married, *sound* man, anxious to preach the gospel on a small salary, not requiring a year in Europe to start off on, capable of originating a revival the first winter, and filling the house on stormy Sundays. These requirements, even to the revival, had been so well met, during his candidacy, by Mr. Malachi Matthew that the people had found themselves already zealously, even affectionately inclined to their chosen pastor. Therefore, Pepperville had received a blow. Therefore, Pepperville surged, as I say.

"The laxity of the present day presents many subtle devices," observed the oldest member of the Council. He wore a huge collar and white choker, into which he sank, after he had spoken, with the air of a man who said: "My sacred office! Respect it, and do not hit me as hard as you would a secular man."

"It seems to me, Dr. Croaker," said one of the younger brethren, crushing on his soft felt hat, and feeling with rather a worldly air for the ends of his mustache — "it seemed to me the man was more muddled than anything else. I suppose we all have our little private reservations. These things have to be taken for substance of doctrine. It's a bad mess, anyhow."

"If he had only paid more attention, Brother Smart, to my question about the nature of duration," chimed in earnestly an honest, plain brother, from a rural parish, "it seemed to me he could have extricated himself. There was a nice psychological point there. I tried to help him. He would n't see it. I was sorry for him."



"It is better as it is, Brother Hearty," said Dr. Croaker. "It is time that we made a stand — made a stand. The young man represents a fatal weakness in our modern theology. There *must be some examples made*. It might as well be he as another. God's Word is not to be trifled with."

"It struck me," interposed one of the Society (a brisk manufacturer, who rented a front pew, but did not "profess") — "it struck me that was precisely what Mr. Matthew thought. As nearly as the profane mind could grasp what you were up to, he claimed that the Bible left so much room for a difference of opinion on this point that it was not business-like to play too sharp a game with the text. That's what I took him to mean."

"Sir," said Dr. Croaker solemnly, "I am sorry for the disappointment of the First Church; but you may thank the Lord that you have been warned in time. Great danger would have threatened your youth if such laxity were allowed to creep into the sheepfold, under the very banner of the Shepherd." He sheltered himself under his choker and turned ponderously away.

"Calls that argument, does he? Humph!" said the manufacturer to the prosperous retail grocer, who was walking sadly by his side.

"Never saw a shepherd with a banner myself," said the grocer; "but perhaps he has. There's no telling what that stock and dickey are capable of. Now we've got to begin this row all over again. Four years more of it, eh? There won't be any too much piety left in this parish by the time we get a man."

"It is very strange," the oldest deacon was saying to the youngest minister. "The young man has preached for us nearly a year, off and on. We never discovered in him any such unsoundness of views as you have. If he held such reprehensible doctrines — as it is plain he does, I suppose — he never preached 'em in *this* pulpit. It's all nooz to us. It's a great pity; for we're in a demoralized condition, spiritooally and financially. I don't know what in " — the deacon recollected himself in time, drew himself up sharply, and severely said — "what in the world is going to become of us?"

By this time the shriller voices of the women became audible.

"I do declare, I'm awful sorry for his wife."

"Well, she's married a heretic; she'd better have read her Bible where it says about being yoked to unbelievers."

"She's kind of pretty. Two rows of something would have improved that alpaca."

"Yes; we'd have fixed her up after they came. She might have had one of Jordan & Marsh's ready-made suits at a darnation party."

This profane suggestion came from a dressy young girl, whose eyes brimmed with something for which Pepperville gave scanty overflow room.

"Well, she split one of her gloves. I saw it — across the thumb."

"She did it wringing her hands together, under her overskirt, out of sight, after she saw it was going against him."

"Is that so? How do you know?"

"I saw her. My! how pale he was. It's a shame."

"It seems to *me* as if he'd played a kind of game on us, not allowing that he was so unsound all this while."

"He's never preached one damnation sermon since he came, come to think of it."

"That was our look-out," interposed the dressy young lady. "If we wanted damnation, we ought to have put it in the bargain. A little more hell-fire, sir, or another candidate."

"Mary Eliza!" said a matron sternly, "if you were pious yourself, you would not swear like that. It's very unladylike, besides."

"I put it to anybody if that is n't the upshot of it?" said Mary Eliza. "There's Jim. Ask him."

The young fellow who approached, laying down his cigar and doffing his hat, looked rather earnestly — for a young fellow — at the pretty girl.

"Miss Mary, can you make out what they *want* it to be true for? I can't."

"They take on about it as if they did; that's a fact," said Mary Eliza. "One would think — if it could be made out any other way — they'd be glad of it. But," more softly, "it's too much for us, Jim. May *be* true, for all we know. Why, yes. I don't know but I'll walk a little way. I must get home to supper. How's your pony, Jim? What was it she had? Blind stages, or whooping cough? I forget."

"And he did set so agreeable on this parish!" continued the matron who had rebuked Mary Eliza. "His sermon on affliction I never heard the beat of. It was a beautiful discourse. Mis' Penny and old Mis' Drowsy, they cried most through the whole of

it. There's few young men could have had such testimony to their labors. And Mary Eliza's youngest sister has taken an interest ever since he's been here. For my part, I liked him first-rate and I always had *supposed* we were LED. But it seems we was n't."

"I liked him myself," courageously uprose another voice, the feeling plainly creeping, like a slow tide, in favor of the rejected heretic. "He had such a way with him. He's the first minister we've had here my Tom would look at. He said he liked his stories, and he said the chap was honest. It was disrespectful of Tom; but he did — he called him a chap! You know boys will be" —

"I don't see that he was any such terrible sight of a heretic, after all. Do you, Miss Teazer?"

"Why, no," plaintively from Miss Teazer, a maiden lady, with perplexed eyes and assured mouth. "Why, no. He didn't say everybody would be saved. Did he? It was only heathen and — let me see — heathen, idiots — and what was the other?"

"Women, perhaps," suggested Mary Eliza, lingering to laugh back across her pretty shoulder.

"I don't think it was women," said Miss Teazer, with an air of great mental acumen. Somebody suggested "babies." Mary Eliza observed that it was all the same. The chatter uprose again more vehemently, if not more coherently.

"After the tea-fights and coffee-scrapes and candy-pulls *and* the sacred tableaux, us women have gone through to raise his salary to nine hundred dollars, for my part, I think a lot of men had n't ought to sit and vote our minister away from us. Now, I s'pose

we've got it all to do over again. My doctor's forbid me ever taking a table again. Jenny says she wishes Rebecca at the Well had never been born. She caught her bronchitis out of the lemonade, you know."

"Oh, Mrs. Banner, have you heard about the fight in the Reform Club?"

"Why, I heard they'd fit; but, there, I've been so busy getting ready for this Consul, I have n't been able to 'tend up to the Reform Club very well."

"Nor I have n't, either. I heard Job Jacobs had broken."

"So did I; but he was out to-day. It's a shame."

"So it is. They need a lot of looking after. I wish we had more time. Oh, Miss Teazer, I believe Molly McGilp is in your class. Can you tell me the facts about that story, you know, that's going the rounds about her? I said I would n't believe it till I knew it, you know."

"I have n't seen Molly, lately," said Miss Teazer. "She was n't at Sunday-school, and we have been so extremely busy. You know we entertained *two* clergymen at our house. There was a good deal of cake to bake, and I always make the sausages myself for such occasions. We sent something to the church, too. It has been a very busy season. I hope I have n't neglected Molly. I shall hunt her up this week."

"How long do you suppose this eternal punishment lasts, anyway?"

"There's Mr. Bowker. Let's ask him. Men know things."

"Well, I don't know. Seems to me they did n't

know any too much to-day. Mr. Matthew lost his breath when they asked him if he would send a Five Points thief to Heaven."

"Is that *so*?"

"Yes, 'n' I thought *she* would faint when they tripped him up so on Gehenna and that Greek word. But I guess she ain't the fainting kind. Thank you, Mr. Bowker. It is rather a heavy shawl. We were just going to ask you how long eternal punishment *really* lasts. We thought you 'd know."

As Mr. and Mrs. Malachi Matthew came out of the church, looking about them timidly, they found themselves close upon a little group which seemed almost as set apart as they were, from the members of Pepperville First Church and the Reverend Council presiding over its Orthodoxy on that unfortunate day.

This group was composed of a few mill-girls, the rumseller, the drunkard, and the horse-jockey, and were all in excellent spirits. One of the reporters stood not far off, writing on the top of his hat. The editor lingered behind the Reverend Mr. Smart and Mr. Hearty, and looked back nodding, not unkindly, at the heretic minister. After a moment's hesitation, this gentleman came back and shook hands with the disgraced man, and said he would be glad of a digest of his views for "The Watch-Tower of Zion;" but that he was late to his train and must hasten away. This attracted the attention of Brother Hearty to the forlorn position of the two poor young people, and he turned to speak to them. One or two women of the parish, conspicuously Mrs. Drowsy, who found such comfort in weeping over



the sermon on Affliction, also made as if they would address the beloved pastor, who had taught them such deadly doctrine for a year without their knowing it. But some one was before them all. It was a well-dressed, self-possessed man, with a large gold watch-guard and a large, cold eye. He tipped his hat to the young preacher, and intimated that he had a word to say to him.

"Are you in concern, my brother?" asked Mr. Malachi Matthew, flushing a little with pleasure at this appeal.

"Why, no," said the man, "it's no concern of mine. That's a fact. It's *your* concern, I know. All I'm after is just to say I like your grit."

"Thank you, my friend," said the minister, a little embarrassed.

"I ain't your friend. Don't you mistake. I ain't pious. I sell rum. I don't drink myself. It's a nasty habit. Keeps you poor. I never drink. But I sell. I sell to Job Jacobs here. I'll own it. It's ruined him. He went to hear you one spell. Give me the cold shoulder for a month. I was glad of it. Job and me was boys together, and I wouldn't mind if you did sober Job. But what I come to say is, I like your pluck. I heard you preach that temperance discourse of yours. It cost me several customers—for a time; but I liked it. You attend to your business. I'tend to mine. According to your views, I'm one of them that'll go to the place they haul you up for knowing nothin' about it, never having had a personal experience; but I can't help that. May be such a place for aught I say. I should n't wonder. I ain't pious, but I like your grit."

"Like 'em myself," said the drunkard solemnly. He stood beside the rumseller in a friendly manner.

"Oh, Job!" said Mr. Malachi Matthew, "do I see you intoxicated again? And in church too?"

"Come to hear 'em pitch in ter yer," said Job. "Sorry yer goin'. Giv' yer my 'and. Club's busted. Reform if yer stay."

"Come, come, Job," said the rumseller, a little abashed; for a crowd was gathering. He put his arm through Job's, and they walked unsteadily away. Mr. and Mrs. Malachi Matthew looked sadly after them; but Brother Hearty came up, and some of the sisters, and the two young people shook hands with these few friends, and exchanged a few confused words. They were very tired and wished to be alone. They looked about, still timidly, and walked as if uncertain of their next step.

The horse-jockey lingered behind, with the mill-girls; more especially with one mill-girl, who wore a red feather and bead trimming. One of the others said:—

"Molly McGilp, Bob wants you."

"I want to know!" said Molly. A little stir while they stood there attracted their attention. One of the Sunday-school teachers, a conscientious girl, was collecting the infant-class in the vestry for half an hour's rehearsal for the Christmas concert. They met on Tuesdays, just before tea, for this commendable purpose. The conscientious girl was very tired to-night, with her seven hours' session at the Council, and collected her flock with difficulty. As soon as the doors were shut, they began at once to sing.

The conscientious girl played the instrument known as a cabinet organ. The children shrilly sang : —

“ Jesus loves me, that I know,  
For the Bible tells me so ! ”

“ Hear that,” said Bob.

“ Molly’s graduated from the Sunday-school,” said one of the girls. “ She was n’t sound.”

“ You need n’t have *said* it, Meg,” said Molly, in a low voice. She looked down the dark street where the drunkard, now deserted by the rumseller, reeled away alone. At the bend of the road a shadowy figure or figures watched for him. It looked like the ghost of a woman holding the hand of a ghastly child.

“ Poor Job ! ” said the girl. “ I ’m sorry for Job.”

The little voices from the vestry sang out, with gathering force : —

“ Jesus loves me, that I know.”

“ He took a shine to the new parson for a while,” said Molly. “ And while they kept that Reform Club going he kept real straight. The women petted him at first ; but I suppose they got tired of him. That Club’s about broke up. There’s nothing going on in Pepperville but heresy these days. Seems they’re so anxious we shall be damned in the next world they have n’t time to notice what we do in this.”

“ I don’t know’s that’s exactly fair, Molly,” said the quietest of the girls. “ Some of ’em mean well.”

“ Oh, yes, we all mean well,” said Molly wearily. “ Here’s Bob. *He* means well. Don’t you, Bob ? ”

She flung him a bitter look ; but, softening, her fine, dark eyes wandered down the street.

“There’s Job’s wife, waiting for him. And the young one. See! she’s got him by the arm. How she begs! Asking him to go home. Cruel they are — men! Poor Betty! Job used to be a handsome fellow.”

She broke into wild singing; a snatch of a chorus that the girls liked, and carried from loom to loom, with passionate power, on dark winter afternoons:—

“Let us live, let us live,  
While we can.  
Where is the soul  
Of a man?  
Find out for yourself,  
By and by.  
To-morrow, to-morrow  
We die.”

One of Molly’s companions took up the refrain, and the horse-jockey struck in on the bass in the last line; but the Sunday-school class in the vestry went bravely on, and strong athwart the factory song the children’s voices grew:—

“Lord, thou hast here thy ninety-and-nine;  
Are they not enough for thee?  
But the shepherd made answer: ‘This of mine  
Has wandered away from me!’”

The conflict of these two discordant strains flung itself far in the clear November air; and many of the good people going home from the meeting-house heard the sound, and lingered, listening or commenting idly among themselves; how faithful Lucy was with her class; how rude the mill-girls were growing since the strike; and what was that point Dr. Croaker made about the difference between restoration and annihilation? and, if a man were unable to repent until the Holy Spirit—

"But none of the ransomed ever knew  
How dark was the night that the Lord passed through,  
Till he found the sheep that was lost!"

sang the little voices in the vestry.

"Come, Molly," said the horse-jockey, after a moment's hesitation. "Have an oyster supper?"

"I don't know as I will to-night, Bob," said the girl. The others had moved away. The young man and the young woman stood by themselves in the shadow of the now dark and deserted church. Molly looked up once at the height of the white, dumb building. In the darkness it seemed to frown.

"I go to the desert to find my sheep,"

sang once more the unconscious children.

"Come, Molly."

She shook her head, and, putting out one hand, she even gently motioned him away.

The Sunday-school hymns stopped. The conscientious girl closed the cabinet organ. The children flocked out. Lucy locked the vestry door. Her class clung about her, as she walked away. Their steps grew fainter. The voices of the crowd returning from the Council had now quite died away. These good people were all well in their respectable homes, preparing to eat their respectable suppers, and respectably have family prayers. Mr. and Mrs. Malachi Matthew were sitting side by side, quite silent, aboard the evening train. The well-dressed rumseller vividly described the afternoon's events across his counter, as he recommended "Bitters" to a boy who feared to find whiskey too much for him. Job Jacobs struck out rather hard at the man who

spoke slightly of the parson, and, getting knocked down and more than usually trampled on, was sent home, looking badly enough, to his wife. She was listening, and came with a light in her hand. A sickly child followed her. The baby was crying. The house was cold, and there seemed to have been no supper.

“Poor Job!” she said, as they brought him in.

“It’s blamed ghastly here by the graveyard,” said Bob, after a long silence. “Ain’t you tired of it, Moll?”

“Go home without me — this once, Bob.”

“Molly, come!”

“I wonder how high that spire goes!” said Molly coldly. She was looking up, infinitely up, beyond the fine, vanishing point that the spire made against the sky, among the stars. But it tired her eyes to do this. She turned away and put her hand through the young fellow’s arm. She did not talk as they walked down the lighted street, and Bob hummed the factory song until she joined him, faintly, louder, clearer, strong at last: —

“Let us live, let us live  
While we can.  
Where is the soul  
Of a man?”



## HIS RELICT.

It is fifty-seven years since Eliakim Twig received from the Congregational Council then holding at Hatfield, Conn., his license to preach. The first person to whom he showed it was Miss Obedience Binney. She received it with awed and trembling fingers. She had always had faith in him—the kind of faith that a thin woman, with delicate features and a Connecticut-Valley bonnet, gives to a man with loud voice and broad shoulders, who has lived in New York city and once preached near Boston. She addressed a letter to him the next week, when he went to East Hartford, as the Reverend E. Twig, for which the recipient rebuked her with some decision, reminding her that the sacred ceremony of ordination must precede a man's claim to the title which she so ignorantly handled. Miss Binney blushed for shame, and wrote no more, till at least two of his letters had lain unanswered for some days.

In course of time, however, Eliakim Twig passed through the mysterious process which converted him from a plain Mister into a Reverend expounder of the Word of God to the less highly-endowed or presumably less highly-sanctified of his fellow-worms. Miss Obedience Binney wondered that he did not immediately receive that urgent call to a prosperous

and important parish which she had been led to suppose (she really could not remember exactly how), as a matter of course, awaited the remarkable man who had honored her with what he called his "affection and esteem," and with the proposition that she should eventually share the privileges and minister to the needs of his important life. Obedience Binney (though she had never said so, which would not have struck her as maidenly) was ready to get upon the knees of her soul to "minister" to this loud, long man. Of her own life, as an integer in their mutual problem, the Reverend Mr. Twig had thought little, and she less. So both were satisfied. Obedience, by the way, was rather pretty when she was young and happy. Most of us, to be sure, can be as much as that, under those two conditions. She, however, had a good complexion (the fair one, with the delicate flush, that loud men fancy) and excellent features, as I said, besides a fine hand.

The Reverend Mr. Twig was born upon a Connecticut tobacco-farm, and, having a soft-hearted though loud-voiced father, had received that high-school education which, for reasons never fully revealed to an inquiring public, comes to a pause at the end of the second year. The young man turned from the cultivation of his intellect to that of the parental tobacco, which he pursued with indifferent animation for an uncertain number of years. While at school, he had, unfortunately, developed what was understood in Hatfield to be elocutionary talent, and had been the star of the anniversary exercises upon several occasions, still well preserved in the Hatfield memory. A popular ballad (delivered a good deal

on one foot) beginning "Arroint thee, knave!" was his masterpiece, unless we except Byron in the "Coliseum," in which, especially upon the line embodying the "Owl's lo-ong cry," he was said to excel himself.

Haunted during the obscure tobacco period by the recollection of these intellectual triumphs, as well as by the stinging consciousness of unusual and unemployed lung-power, young Mr. Twig was not without those restless surgings of the spirit toward higher things which, when we find them in superior natures we respect and stimulate, while in the commoner types, where they are infinitely more pathetic and in vastly more need of our delicate handling, we gain from them chiefly food for our sense of the ludicrous, which is apt to be the most cruel of our faculties; like other cruel facts in the economy of the universe, perhaps one of the most necessary.

Influenced possibly by these unfulfilled aspirations and by the depression which aspiration may produce even in people with big voices, Eliakim Twig, after two or three years of tobacco, in one of the annual winter revivals which chronically visited the Hatfield church, became converted. Unfortunately, he developed in the daily meetings, which were the chief moral and social excitement of Hatfield for several weeks, what was known as a "gift in prayer." His voice was fatal to him, if not to the gospel ministry, which he immediately decided to enter. He went to New York (where he chanced to have a forbearing relative, who boarded him at cost), and entered or attempted to enter the Theological Seminary in that city. His stay was short and was

understood in Hatfield to be detrimental to his health. He abandoned New York theology as he had abandoned Hatfield tobacco, and, after an interval vaguely supposed to be spent in private study, drifted into a rural seminary in Maine, which provided what was known as an "extra course" for students of superabundant zeal and deficient education. It is easy to speak of these things lightly; easier than to remember what hard and heavy facts they represent.

At the end of two years, the young man was "graduated" in the profound and sacred science with which his profession deals, and turned over to the Hatfield Council, as we said, for his license to carry the message of the Eternal God to blind and busy men. It might have been worse. The embryo preacher was not a hypocrite; he was only an honest, healthy, vain young man, with a taste for declamation. We all know such cases, and we know now and then one where there has existed a personal surrender to the service of the modest and self-subduing Galilean whom these youth dare to represent, which has made of a half-taught but wholly consecrated man a Christian priest of whom the world and the glory of it are not worthy.

One person at least believed Eliakim Twig to be such a man, and that was Obedience Binney the day he married her, in her step-mother's parlor, in the presence of a large number of Hatfield church members in good and regular standing, and of family friends, including the New York relative, who kept his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the bride, and his thoughts to himself. Obedience wore a white

muslin gown, shirred at the waist, with full sleeves and a white satin ribbon. She looked exceedingly pretty, in spite of the artificial orange blossom in her hair. Her young face had the rapturous and fatal feminine trust. Mr. Twig looked as if he were about to offer prayer.

It was in December, and there was a great fire in the air-tight stove during the entire ceremony. Mrs. Binney said afterward she hoped nobody took cold.

They married upon faith, an income commonly supposed sixty years ago to be both suitable and sufficient for members of Mr. Twig's profession, and they proceeded to live upon their income. The Reverend Eliakim Twig did not as yet receive that pressing call to that important church for which his wife, in common with himself, still pathetically supposed him to be destined. He preached at odd times and in odd places. Now and then he "supplied" for a few months. More often than now and then he "candidated" in empty and critical pulpits. Mrs. Twig acquired a sad familiarity with these professional terms, and could no longer be accused of any technical ignorance. She corrected her mother for saying that Mr. Twig had "castigated" several Connecticut churches.

The young couple were understood to be temporarily boarding at the bride's mother's, a phrase which contained no reflection upon the present and much promise for the future, and was adopted with a readiness creditable to Hatfield society. For the brief and blessed interval that fate allows to many not joyous lives, Obedience had happiness. Her gentle, unassertant nature was not critical of com-

fort. She passed through her first illusions brightly, and met her first disenchantments in silence. When her husband lost his temper because his boots were muddy, she said: "I'll black them, dear." (*De mortuis nil*—history does not compel me to state whether he let her do it.) Perhaps the most astonishing discovery of her married life was that Mr. Twig found it so hard to bear a toothache. His ability to take all the cream without asking her if she had any did not shock her; she considered cream one of his marital rights. The first time he was cross to her, she cried a little; but she shut herself into her own room to do it, and carefully removed all traces of the tears before she went to supper. The second time she did not even cry. Mr. Twig had just returned from candidating (she had begun to experience nervous chills at the sound of the word, especially when it was distinctly pronounced and the second syllable not slurred over; there seemed to be degrees of moral emphasis in the use of it). Mr. Twig had been candidating in East Hartford, and she said: "Poor fellow!"

East Hartford did not want him. That important place "near Boston" did not invite him. There was a vacant pulpit in Massachusetts which had been for five years unable to agree upon a pastor, and which, it was estimated, had pronounced against one hundred and seventeen presumptuous young men. It was a parish of about sixty families, and offered a salary of six hundred dollars to the fortunate applicant. Theological seminaries and clerical exchanges had grown shy of that pulpit, and it was thought that Mr. Twig would have received a call. He did, indeed, make



the impression of being a man of talent, and the vote in his favor was considerable, it being urged by an influential deacon that "we might go further and far' wus;" and suggested that for a gift at reading funeral hymns, more especially "Why do we mourn?" and "Sister thou wast," it would not be easy to find his superior. The women of the parish were largely, though not unanimously, in his interest; but, as they had no votes, constituted three fourths of the church members, and had paid off the society's debt by laborious doughnuts and persistent pincushions, their opinions were not consulted. Mr. Twig was invited to supply for six Sundays, and even the gentle Obedience wondered at the result and went the daring length in skepticism of admitting to herself that the ways of Providence were mysterious. But to her husband she only said: "Never mind, dear. They are a people who could not appreciate you!" and timidly stroked his coarse black hair with her fine hand. When his gloomy features relaxed, and he took her face upon those big shoulders, and said she was a good wife, she could not have been much happier if he had candidated successfully in the Golden City, and she had sat in the front pew of the Church Triumphant, watching the enraptured faces of the influential archangels who were to pronounce upon the celestial call.

The Reverend Mr. Twig had that unintelligent pride and obstinacy which often characterize people who have nothing to live on, and he refused the Massachusetts supply. Preaching was scarce, just then, and it went rather hard with them, especially as the young clergyman's step-mother-in-law hap-

pened to die about that time and threw them out of a boarding-place. Old Mr. Twig offered them a home for an uncertain time, to be sure ; but he had a shrewd Yankee mortification in his son, which he found it difficult to conceal, and he offended Eliakim by suggesting that he turn to at the tobacco again.

"I don't see what it is about 'Likim," the old man said to Obedience. "I've taken some pains to find out why he ain't successful in his trade. I spent a sight on his learnin', and Mis' Binney, she's boarded him now two year. He's got learnin' and he's got lungs. What more dooz a man want to run a pulpit? I inquired of a man that knew another man that come from East Hartford, and he said the East Hartford folks had n't no sort of objections to 'Likim. He was pious, and he read the impertory psalms as never was by no minister in that pulpit; but he said their old deacon said all the young man wanted was *a few ideas*. I told 'Likim that, for I thought, if that was all, he'd ought to know it and lay in a supply ekal to the demand. It's common business sense. Just lay in a supply ekal to the demand. I allers did with my tobacco."

But old Mr. Twig, in the evening of a life severely consecrated to that elevating vegetable, had secretly slipped into one of those fatal lapses to which long-sustained virtue is pitiaibly liable, and, unknown to his family or his deacons, had speculated in the then popular stock of the Consolidated Dare and Doubtful and Widow's Mite Railways. Hence, when he likewise was soon afterward removed, on a calm autumn morning, from the garnering of tobacco to that of

amaranth and asphodel, whatever may have been said by the angels in Heaven, it was forced upon the executors on earth to announce that the Dare and Doubtful and the Widow's Mite had swallowed and digested the estate, and that there remained to the only son and heir three hundred and twelve dollars, and a set of "Barnes's Notes."

"Never mind, dear," said Obedience. "He was a kind father, and he educated you for the Christian ministry."

Now the current swerved a little, soon after this, as it will with the most unlucky of us, and the Reverend Mr. Twig, after nearly three years of that kind of probation which quenches the light out of women's eyes and wrings the good temper out of men's hearts, received a call to become the pastor of a parish of uncertain geographical location and limited historical importance in the State of Maine.

He was inclined, at first, to refuse the invitation, on the ground of the insufficient importance of the position; he had of late been in correspondence with a seminary classmate, who had declined five calls, in the belief that the Lord intended him for a larger type of usefulness; but the plain good sense of Mrs. Twig, for once in her gentle life, uprose and claimed a hearing. She carried her point and settled her minister. They had four hundred dollars and a parsonage; and ah! they had, at last, a parish, a position, and a justification for existence. Obedience went the length in extravagance of new gray bonnet-strings (satin, with a pink sprig) at the installation, and at the first Sunday-morning service in their own church, hid beneath her beaver poke those tears of

tenderness and tremulous hope which a sweet-hearted woman can wring out of the most barren contingencies of life. She held up her head with a beautiful motion when she waited for her husband to lead her down the aisle, to introduce her to the president of the sewing-society. To the end of her days she spoke with a pathetic pride of "our people." Mr. Twig remained in that parish (East Economy was the name of it) for three years and a half.

It is not within the scope of these brief records to follow the Reverend Mr. Twig through the details of his professional career; but his wife, we must remember, had to. Life to her was one dread attendance upon the moods, and dependence upon the mercy, of church committees. Between the apathy of parishes and the undoubted superiority of Mr. Twig's gifts, her unspeculative soul vibrated with piteous helplessness. When he was in search of a pulpit, she trusted the Lord, and fiercely adored her husband. When he had one, she felt that the world was more appreciative than she had given it credit for; but kept one eye on the senior deacon, to see how the long prayer struck him. When Mr. Twig became a traveling agent for a denominational society, she perceived that now, for the first time, he had found the right field for his talents, and in her secret soul gave thanks that the day of deacons was over. When the society no longer required his services, she made him an omelette for supper, and did all her crying after he was asleep. When he taught classes in elocution, she experienced a rising tide of admiration for him. When he assisted in editing a religious paper, she stood in awe of him. When he

wrote a book on Samuel Hopkins, she taught an infant-school, to help him. When the book failed to find a publisher, she took boarders to support him. When he started out as an evangelist, she stayed at home and prayed for him. Thus life dealt with her.

The gray was heavy in her hair and the fire low in her heart when their first and only child was born to them. They had been married fifteen years, and the baby took by surprise a struggling and dejected home. To the father he was a phenomenon, to be regarded alternately with a certain inevitable stirring at the heart-strings, or with a sense of extreme personal inconvenience. For the mother, he added another to the terribly unquestioning devotions, raptures, and agonies of her life. When her husband was irritable she kissed her child. When she went without meat, to save seventeen cents a week to buy the boy shoes, she thought less about Mr. Twig's misfortunes.

The boy grew fast, and did not, even his mother acknowledged, early develop a spiritual temperament. He was a big, hearty, rollicking fellow, who stamped through all his boots before there were any more, even after she had given up eggs and cut down her tea. He had curly hair and did not like his father. He objected to being punished for whistling at prayers when Mr. Twig read the chapter recording the murder of the priests of Baal by Jehu on Christmas Eve. The boy expressed bitter disloyalty to the professional environment of the family, and many unfilial intentions to see "a world that was n't pious;" and one New Year's night, he being then thirteen and a handsome fellow, more full of vigor than conscious of tenderness, his mother missed him,

and the child of prayer and patience, like any offspring of neglect and vice, turned his soul from her who bore him, and vanished in the mighty world.

Obedience Twig aged fast after this befell her; and when, while still in the prime of life, and looking much younger than herself, her husband, too, disappeared into that mightier world whose mysterious relation to this he had undertaken to interpret to men of less vocal gift, and perhaps of less real loftiness of purpose, but alas! of more common sense — when Mr. Twig had pneumonia and died, like any common man, Obedience for a time confidently expected to follow him quite soon. He had a brief illness — it seemed mysterious that he could give way at the lungs, after all; and he was very gentle and patient, and told Mrs. Twig that the Lord would provide, and that she had been a good wife. In one of his delirious moments he said that perhaps he had better have stuck to the tobacco; but he passed away, repeating sonorously a biblical quotation, and when Obedience passionately cried: “Mr. Twig! Mr. Twig! Speak to me once more! Eliakim!” he put his hand upon his wife’s head, and finished the most beautiful of all apostolic benedictions: “*The Lord cause His face to shine upon thee and give thee peace.*” And so, like wiser men, Mr. Twig took upon himself the dignity of death.

At first, as I say, his wife expected to follow him. That physical death which hid under the snow and frozen sod seemed a far less palpable fact than the moral disintegration of her personality. Her meek little pinched face looked like a lamp that was going out. What remained for a woman who had been the



wife of the Reverend Eliakim Twig? She looked at his gray slate tombstone enviously, dreaming of the day when she, like other "relicts" in Hatfield churchyard, should rest from her labors beside her lord. She was worn out, poor soul. There was, indeed, very little of her left over, after Mr. Twig's abundant voice had, for the first known occasion in his life, faltered in that final benediction.

But Obedience Twig, like stronger women, learned that, however little is left over when the heart is broken, death does not come because he is expected, still less because he is desired. The smoking flax burns long, and the bruised reed, because the first to bend, may be the last to break.

One thing was left to her. She had a dignity to maintain. She had been the wife of Eliakim Twig. When people asked her what she intended to do, she gently replied, "Something suitable will open," and prayed the Lord for respectability as fervently as she ever had for sanctification or a call. She fought for it, too, in the mild, unnoticed way in which such women battle. She resumed the infant-school. She gave (may Art forgive her!) lessons upon the piano. She embroidered, and kept boarders. She trimmed bonnets, and sold tatting. She had no near relatives, and when one of Mr. Twig's cousins in South Hatfield invited her to spend Thanksgiving and half of the following week, she declined. For ten years she kept her body, if not her soul, alive. She was then over sixty years old, and it grew hard.

It grew hard, and then harder. She felt compelled to offer her services as a housekeeper. She had never heard before of a minister's wife advertising

for such a position. She pictured Mr. Twig as declaiming (chiefly from the Book of Revelation) to a large celestial audience, and feeling very much ashamed of her. The position proved to be that of what is called a working housekeeper, in a family engaged in some business obscurely known as "fish," in a cheap seaport town; and the old lady found herself virtually the servant of a salt-cod packer and his seven noisy children. She wondered patiently what any of the people in East Economy would have said to see her in this place; and when, indeed, one of that now almost mythical community happened to find her there, and called upon her, she put off her cooking-apron with trembling hands, and choked, blinded, when she saw the man's face, for pride and shame. "I am very comfortable, Deacon Bobley," she sobbed. "I want for nothing. I have a very respectable and suitable position. I have prayed, night and morning, for twelve years, that I might be kept out of the — out of the — that I might be kept from a dependence upon charity. And I think the Lord will hear me, Deacon Bobley — for Mr. Twig's sake," she added, unconscious of the pathetic irreverence of those four words.

As she grew older and feebler, her sturdy American dread of becoming an object of public charity deepened to a horror. No one in her presence pronounced the one word which never passed her own lips. People who knew her turned sharp corners in conversation to avoid mention of an alms-house or a pauper.

This was more noticeable in Screwsbury, a little town in Connecticut, to which she had wandered,

after having a slow fever at the salt-fish packer's, and receiving her notice to leave. In Screwsbury, she took a tiny room, and advertised for plain sewing and light nursing, and here for a time, in a forlorn way, she found ease. People treated her civilly in Screwsbury. She felt that they understood that she had been a clergyman's wife. She had a seat in the minister's pew, till his boys came home from college and filled it. He was an excellent minister, but she wished he could have heard Mr. Twig unite in prayer.

It was in Screwsbury that Mrs. Twig began to feel that she was growing old. She did not go out, except to church and upon her business. One road in town she carefully avoided. It led to the Screwsbury poor-house. It was said that she had never seen the place. As her body grew feebler, that horror grew stronger. It was very strong in Screwsbury.

She had no friend or old neighbor in this place, and her little straits, and economies, and silences, had the sad shield of age and obscurity. Nobody quite knew, or much cared, how poor she was, until fit after fit of sickness brought her condition to the knowledge of well-meaning people, who gave currency to that little notion of hers about the poor-house, and so drew her case under the attention of the town officers. She had commanded a certain respect in Screwsbury, from her tenderness to the sick, and the uncomplaining reserve, called Christian, with which she withheld her own sufferings from the compassion of others. What should Screwsbury do with her?

"I cannot go to the ——. I cannot be dependent

on charity," she said, with gentle insistence. "I shall be better soon. I have supported myself for twenty years. The Lord will provide. You must not send me to the ——. It would not be suitable. I am a minister's wife. My husband was the Reverend Mr. Twig."

It was a hard case; but what could Screwsbury do? She had her own paupers, and invalids, and decayed gentility to the manor born; but Screwsbury found herself uncomfortable to leave a woman of seventy years without a fire in March; and to let her die from insufficient food and attention, because she insisted on it, was asking a good deal even of Screwsbury. Cold, and hunger, and nakedness, the town auditor could understand; but for that starving need called delicate feeling, the treasurer had made no provision. Screwsbury was puzzled. A certain sum was raised, and the old lady made comfortable in a desultory way till spring. In the summer, she sewed a little, and a little more was collected in the irregular manner known to village charity. Nobody was responsible for her, and when the weather chilled again, with the chill of her seventy-first autumn, Screwsbury shook its head.

On a sharp October day, a man not personally known to Mrs. Twig, called upon her, with a couple of ladies who had sent her cranberry jelly, and explained to her that, owing to her feeble condition, it had been thought best by her friends in that town to remove her to a boarding-place, where she would receive every care and attention, and that arrangements had been made to that effect. He added that he would take her to this good place to-morrow, and

one of the ladies at this point produced a new jar of jelly, and said it would be an excellent thing; but the other one brought her a meat-pie, and said nothing.

"Did you say it was a *boarding-place*?" asked Mrs. Twig, after a painful silence.

"Yes, marm, I — did," replied the man.

"Who pays my board?"

"Why, some ladies and gentlemen that live here. We think, marm, you will be more comfortable."

Mrs. Twig looked at the lady with the meat-pie, but she had turned her back. The jelly lady said it would be a very comfortable home. Mrs. Twig lifted her faded eyes with the fatal feminine trust that life had not drowned out of them, and simply said:—

"You have been good to me. I do not think you would deceive me. I will go to this boarding-place, and I thank the ladies and gentlemen who have been so kind."

She was very feeble the next day; but she bravely got herself into her best clothes and rode away with the excellent man and the jelly lady. The lady who brought the meat-pie did not return to see her off, and Mrs. Twig sent her love to her, and said how tender the crust was. It was dusk when they called for her, and her eyes were a little blind with the scanty tears of age. She felt that the Screwsbury neighbors were kind, but she wished it had been some of "our people" down at East Economy, to whom she might have been thus indebted — some of the ladies in the parish who said she was the most spiritual minister's wife they ever had, or one of

those sweet Sunday-school girls who used to kiss her. She thought a good deal about the people as she rode to her boarding-house; but she said nothing of her thoughts, and thanked everybody, and was very docile and feeble, and went at once to bed, only calling the jelly lady back, to say: —

“I could not have gone to the ——. I am a minister’s wife. It would not have been proper. I thank the ladies and gentlemen for this kind home.”

She seemed contented, they said, and slept peacefully that night.

“Do you mean to say” — began the superintendent, when the selectman came down-stairs.

“Yes, I mean to say just that. She don’t know where she is. She would have froze in the street first. Seventy-one years old and nigh used up, and a little woman without much voice; but, I can tell you, she’d have done it, she’d have froze stiff as a pipe-stem, if she had known. She’s that grit.”

“It seems a pity,” observed the alms-house superintendent.

“Wall, it dooz,” admitted the selectman.

“But we’d collected a good while,” said the lady who made jelly.

“You say she don’t know?” repeated the superintendent.

“I wish she need n’t,” suggested the lady. “I might go on sending her jelly, to make it natural.”

“By George, I wish so too,” said the selectman. “I told you t’other day the women said so; but I told ’em it warn’t possible.”

“A great deal is possible in my alms-house,” said the superintendent, drawing himself up. “*She never shall.*”



The selectman shrugged his shoulders, but the women believed; and the one who made jelly sent the superintendent a Christmas card, upon which a red angel practiced gymnastics in a loop of blue roses, and seemed to have missed his footing and come down hard.

If it were not true, it would be so preposterous a thing to originate that I might possibly expect to be believed; but, as it is no fiction, probably the fact will go hard with the reader. Nevertheless, a fact it is that she never did.

The poor old lady lived on to the end in touching gratitude to the ladies and gentlemen of Screwsbury who had provided her with such a pleasant boarding-place. No person undeceived her. She became bed-ridden, and failed fast. They gave her a position of consideration in a small ward, and her nearest roommate was deaf and dumb. The others regarded her with interest, and spoke to her with caution. They acquired a certain skill and pleasure in deterring the old lady from the consciousness of their common fate. It became the pride of the institution to preserve her in this merciful delusion. Many ludicrous and touching instances are related of the efforts of these hapless beings to heighten her sense of her own privilege and of that precious self-respect for which she had fought so long. They did the thing. The Screwsbury paupers had that delicacy. She never knew.

But, as I said, she failed fast in her excellent boarding-place, and on Christmas week she wandered a little, and talked a good deal about Mr. Twig, and now and then her boy. But only the deaf-mute was

near at hand. She was a big woman and gentle, and Mrs. Twig liked her for a nurse. "I am a minister's wife," said Mrs. Twig. "I prayed night and morning for twelve years that I should never go to the poor-house. I always knew the Lord would hear that prayer."

The deaf mute nodded.

"This is a very pleasant boarding-place," said Mrs. Twig. "It would gratify my husband. My husband was the Reverend Mr. Twig."

On New Year's Eve she seemed so weak that the superintendent, who had a message for her, hesitated at the door; but came in at length and said that there was a caller for her, and would she see the gentleman?

"It may be some of our people," said Mrs. Twig faintly. "Ask the deaf lady to find me my best cap. Maybe it is Deacon Bobley."

But when the gentleman came in, it was not Deacon Bobley. She gathered herself, and seemed in a kind of terror for a moment, to retreat from him; but against the thin little alms-house pillows she lay at bay. The gentleman came softly up and leaned above her; but no one spoke, until, in low, awed tones, that penetrated the silent ward, she said: "*Are you Mr. Twig? Am I dead already?*"

"Oh, mother, no! Thank God!"

She threw out her slender, shrunken hands, and gasped, and he held her to the air, daring neither to speak nor to be mute, and praying, perhaps, that he might not have killed her — the first prayer of eighteen wandering years. He was a big, handsome fellow, and his face bore the marks of a reckless

life; yet there was a certain touching likeness between the two. The paupers talked of it for many a day.

"I had a little boy," said the old lady drearily. "He wore jackets and a round cap. His name was 'Likim. He was named for his father. His father was the Reverend Mr. Twig. He was a minister's son. He had a respectable home. He used to *seem* to love his mother."

The prodigal hid his face and groaned. The sound seemed to arouse her, and perhaps to clarify thoughts which she had no strength to express. She regarded him long and steadily, and at last she said: "It is very kind in you, my son, to come and see me."

Then the young man cried, it has been said, with an exceeding great and bitter cry: "Mother, you'll *kill* me!" And, brokenly protesting that he was bad enough, God knew, but not so black as he seemed, tried to make her understand some story that he had to tell, about believing she was dead.

"I read it in a Connecticut paper (I was in Idaho) — Mrs. Obedience Twig. I thought it must be you. I thought there was nothing to come back for. I didn't care for father. He and I never got on. Mother, can't you live a *little* while?" and so on, piteously enough.

"Was it the *Reverend* Mrs. Obedience Twig?" asked the old lady distinctly. "It would have been the Reverend Mrs. Twig," she added, and sank away into a kind of faint.

When she came to herself again, she seemed to have accepted both her shock and her joy in a beautiful and placid manner. She held his hand, and

called him little 'Likim, and thanked him when he kissed her, and asked him what he was crying for. She said she felt much better, and that to-morrow she would tell him what a pleasant boarding-place she had.

"We will go away to-morrow," urged the young man. "I will find you a better place."

But the superintendent in the doorway motioned, putting a finger on his lips.

"It is a very pleasant place," said Mrs. Twig. "The ladies and gentlemen were very kind. I was afraid I should come to the ——. That would have — mortified — you. I knew that prayer would be answered. I'm very glad to see you, 'Likim, in my boarding-house."

But after this, she talked no more for a long time. Only now and then she called him her dear son, and patted him upon the head, and said she was glad he had come to see her, and that he loved his mother.

Toward midnight she turned, and asked for the deaf lady, saying that she wanted to kiss her, which she did with a gratitude and tenderness moving to see.

After this, she asked for a pencil and paper, and laboriously wrote for some time. When she had written, she gave the paper to her son, explaining to him that it contained the inscription upon Mr. Twig's slate tombstone, and that which she desired to have added.

"If it does n't cost too much," she said timidly. "If you can afford it just as well as not, I should like it all put on. The engraver asked so much a

letter, when your father died ; we had to do the best we could. Have you got a little ready money, 'Likim ? ”

“ A little, mother.”

“ And you're sure you won't mind the expense of it, my son ? It would be a comfort to me ; but I would n't like to put you to expense.”

But with that, for she saw how moved he was, she stroked his hair again and said : —

“ There, there, my son. Never mind, dear ! ” — just as she used to speak to his father, after candidating ; and so said nothing after this again ; and the deaf-mute cried ; but the superintendent went downstairs.

By and by the young man read what was written on the wet and crumpled paper that he had been crushing in his hands : —

“ Here lies the body of  
The Reverend  
Eliakim Twig,

Who died in the hope of a bles<sup>d</sup> Resurrectio<sup>n</sup>.”

Then followed a date, and after that the addenda for which the engraver had charged too much : —

“ An earnest Preacher.  
A devout Man.  
A devoted Husband.

Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

“ Here lies the body of  
Obedience,  
Relict of the Reverend  
Eliakim Twig  
And mother of ———.”

A space was left here for the young man's own

name, and for the date and circumstances of his death. Under this blank, her trembling hand had scrawled :—

“A KIND AND AFFECTIONATE SON.

A Credit to

His Godly Father, and

The World.”



## MARY ELIZABETH.

### HER TRUE STORY.

MARY ELIZABETH was a little girl with a long name. She was poor, she was sick, she was ragged, she was dirty, she was cold, she was hungry, she was frightened. She had no home, she had no mother, she had no father. She had no supper, she had had no dinner, she had had no breakfast. She had no place to go, and nobody to care whether she went or not. In fact, Mary Elizabeth had not much of anything but a short pink calico dress, a little red cotton-and-wool shawl, and her long name. Besides this, she had a pair of old rubbers, too large for her. They flopped on the pavement as she walked.

She was walking up Washington Street in Boston. It was late in the afternoon of a bitter January day. Already the lamplighters were coming with their long poles, and gas-lights began to flash upon the grayness — neither day nor night — through which the child watched the people moving dimly, with a wonder in her heart. This wonder was as confused as the half-light in which the crowd hurried by.

“God made so many people,” thought Mary Elizabeth, “he must have made so many suppers. Seems as if there’d ought to been one for one extry little girl.”

But she thought this in a gentle way. She was a

very gentle little girl. All girls who had n't anything were not like Mary Elizabeth. She roomed with a girl out toward Charlestown who was different. That girl's name was Jo. They slept in a box that an Irish woman let them have in an old shed. The shed was too cold for her cow, and she could n't use it; so she told Jo and Mary Elizabeth that they might have it as well as not. Mary Elizabeth thought her very kind. There was this difference between Jo and Mary Elizabeth: when Jo was hungry, she stole; when Mary Elizabeth was hungry, she begged.

On the night of which I speak, she begged hard. It is very wrong to beg, we all know. It is wrong to give to beggars, we all know, too; we have been told so a great many times. Still, if I had been as hungry as Mary Elizabeth, I presume I should have begged, too. Whether I should have given her anything if I had been on Washington Street that January night, how can I tell?

At any rate, nobody did. Some told her to go to the Orphans' Home. Some said: "Ask the police." Some people shook their heads, and more people did nothing at all. One lady told her to go to the St. Priscilla and Aquila Society, and Mary Elizabeth said: "Thank you, ma'am," politely. She had never heard of Aquila and Priscilla. She thought they must be policemen. Another lady bade her go to an Office and be Registered, and Mary Elizabeth said: "*Ma'am?*"

So now she was shuffling up Washington Street, — I might say flopping up Washington Street, — not knowing exactly what to do next; peeping into

people's faces, timidly looking away from them; hesitating; heart-sick, — for a very little girl can be very heart-sick, — colder, she thought, every minute, and hungrier each hour than she was the hour before.

The child left Washington Street at last, where everybody had homes and suppers without one extra one to spare for a little girl, and turned into a short, bright, showy street, where stood a great hotel. Everybody in Boston knows, and a great many people out of Boston know, that hotel; in fact, they know it so well that I will not mention the name of it, because it was against the rules of the house for beggars to be admitted, and perhaps the proprietor would not like it if I told how this one especial little beggar got into his well-conducted house. Indeed, precisely how she got in nobody knows. Whether the door-keeper was away, or busy, or sick, or careless, or whether the head-waiter at the dining-room door was so tall that he could n't see so short a beggar, or whether the clerk at the desk was so noisy that he could n't hear so still a beggar, or however it was, Mary Elizabeth did get in, — by the door-keeper, past the head-waiter, under the shadow of the clerk, — over the smooth, slippery marble floor, the child crept on. She came to the office door, and stood still. She looked around her with wide eyes. She had never seen a place like that. Lights flashed over it, many and bright. Gentlemen sat in it smoking and reading. They were all warm. Not one of them looked as if he had had no dinner, and no breakfast, and no supper.

“How many extry suppers,” thought the little

girl, "it must ha' taken to feed 'em all. I guess maybe there'll be one for me in here."

There was a little noise, a very little one, strange to the warm, bright, well-ordered room. It was not the rattling of the "Boston Advertiser," or the "Transcript," or the "Post;" it was not the slight rap-rapping of a cigar stump, as the ashes fell from some one's white hands; nobody coughed, and nobody swore. It was a different sound. It was the sound of an old rubber, much too large, flopping on the marble floor. Several gentlemen glanced at their own well-shod and well-brushed feet, then up and around the room.

Mary Elizabeth stood in the middle of it, in her pink calico dress and red-plaid shawl. The shawl was tied over her head, and about her neck with a ragged tippet. She looked very funny and round behind, like the wooden women in the Noah's Ark. Her bare feet showed in the old rubbers. She began to shuffle about the room, holding out one purple little hand.

One or two of the gentlemen laughed; some frowned; more did nothing at all; most did not notice, or did not seem to notice, the child. One said:—

"What's the matter, here?"

Mary Elizabeth flopped on. She went from one to another, less timidly; a kind of desperation had taken possession of her. The odors from the dining-room came in, of strong, hot coffee, and strange, roast meats. Mary Elizabeth thought of Jo. It seemed to her she was so hungry that, if she could not get a supper, she should jump up and run, and

rush about, and snatch something, and steal, like Jo. She held out her hand, but only said : —

“I’m hungry !”

A gentleman called her. He was the gentleman who had asked, “What’s the matter, here ?” He called her in behind his “New York Times,” which was big enough to hide three of Mary Elizabeth, and when he saw that nobody was looking, he gave her a five-cent piece, in a hurry, as if he had done a sin, and quickly said : —

“There, there, child ! go, now, go !”

Then he began to read the “Times” quite hard and fast and to look severe, as one does who never gives anything to beggars, as a matter of principle.

But nobody else gave anything to Mary Elizabeth. She shuffled from one to another, hopelessly. Every gentleman shook his head. One called for a waiter to put her out. This frightened her, and she stood still.

Over by a window, in a lonely corner of the great room, a young man was sitting, apart from the others. Mary Elizabeth had seen that young man when she first came in, but he had not seen her. He had not seen anything nor anybody. He sat with his elbows on the table, and his face buried in his arms. He was a well-dressed young man, with brown, curling hair. Mary Elizabeth wondered why he looked so miserable, and why he sat alone. She thought, perhaps, if he weren’t so happy as the other gentlemen, he would be more sorry for cold and hungry girls. She hesitated, then flopped along and directly up to him.

One or two gentlemen laid down their papers, and

watched this ; they smiled and nodded at each other. The child did not see them, to wonder why. She went up, and put her hand upon the young man's arm.

He started. The brown, curly head lifted itself from the shelter of his arms ; a young face looked sharply at the beggar-girl, — a beautiful young face it might have been. It was haggard now, and dreadful to look at, — bloated, and badly marked with the unmistakable marks of a wicked week's debauch. He roughly said : —

“What do you want ?”

“I'm hungry,” said Mary Elizabeth.

“I can't help that. Go away.”

“I have n't had anything to eat for a whole day — a *whole day* !” repeated the child.

Her lip quivered. But she spoke distinctly. Her voice sounded through the room. One gentleman after another had laid down his paper or his pipe. Several were watching this little scene.

“Go away !” repeated the young man irritably. “Don't bother me. I have n't had anything to eat for *three* days !”

His face went down into his arms again. Mary Elizabeth stood staring at the brown, curling hair. She stood perfectly still for some moments. She evidently was greatly puzzled. She walked away a little distance, then stopped, and thought it over.

And now, paper after paper, and pipe after cigar went down. Every gentleman in the room began to look on. The young man, with the beautiful brown curls, and dissipated, disgraced, and hidden face, was not stiller than the rest. The little figure in



the pink calico, and the red shawl, and big rubbers stood for a moment silent among them all. The waiter came to take her out, but the gentlemen motioned him away.

Mary Elizabeth turned her five-cent piece over and over slowly in her purple hand. Her hand shook. The tears came. The smell of the dinner from the dining-room grew savory and strong. The child put the piece of money to her lips as if she could have eaten it, then turned, and, without further hesitation, went back. She touched the young man — on the bright hair, this time — with her trembling little hand.

The room was so still now that what she said rang out to the corridor, where the waiters stood, with the clerk behind looking over the desk to see.

“I’m sorry you are so hungry. If you have n’t had anything for three days, you must be hungrier than me. I’ve got five cents. A gentleman gave it to me. I wish you would take it. I’ve only gone *one* day. You can get some supper with it, and — maybe — I — can get some, somewheres! I wish you’d please to take it!”

Mary Elizabeth stood quite still, holding out her five-cent piece. She did not understand the sound and the stir that went all over the bright room. She did not see that some of the gentlemen coughed and wiped their spectacles. She did not know why the brown curls before her came up with such a start, nor why the young man’s wasted face flushed red and hot with noble shame.

She did not in the least understand why he flung the five-cent piece upon the table, and snatching her

in his arms held her fast, and hid his face on her plaid shawl and sobbed. Nor did she know what could be the reason that nobody seemed amused to see this gentleman cry ; but that the gentleman who had given her the money came up, and some more came up, and they gathered round, and she in the midst of them, and they all spoke kindly, and the young man with the bad face that might have been so beautiful, stood up, still clinging to her, and said aloud : —

“She’s shamed me before you all, and she’s shamed me to myself ! I’ll learn a lesson from this beggar, so help me God !”

So then, he took the child upon his knee, and the gentlemen came up to listen, and the young man asked her what was her name.

“Mary Elizabeth, sir.”

“Names used to mean things — in the Bible — when I was as little as you. I read the Bible then. Does Mary Elizabeth mean Angel of Rebuke ?”

“*Sir* ?”

“Where do you live, Mary Elizabeth ?”

“Nowhere, sir.”

“Where do you sleep ?”

“In Mrs. O’Flynn’s shed, sir. It’s too cold for the cows. She’s so kind, she lets us stay.”

“Whom do you stay with ?”

“Nobody, only Jo.”

“Is Jo your brother ?”

“No, sir. Jo is a girl. I have n’t got only Jo.”

“What does Jo do for a living ?”

“She — gets it, sir.”

“And what do you do ?”

"I beg. It's better than to — get it, sir, I think."

"Where's your mother?"

"Dead."

"What did she die of?"

"Drink, sir," said Mary Elizabeth, in her distinct and gentle tone.

"Ah, — well. And your father?"

"He is dead. He died in prison."

"What sent him to prison?"

"Drink, sir."

"Oh!"

"I had a brother once," continued Mary Elizabeth, who grew quite eloquent with so large an audience, "but he died, too."

"What did he die of?"

"Drink, sir," said the child cheerfully. "I *do* want my supper," she added, after a pause, speaking in a whisper, as if to Jo or to herself, "and Jo'll be wondering for me."

"Wait, then," said the young man. "I'll see if I can't beg enough to get you your supper."

"I *thought* there must be an extry one among so many folks!" cried Mary Elizabeth; for now, she thought, she should get back her five cents.

And truly; the young man put the five cents into his hat, to begin with. Then he took out his purse, and put in something that made less noise than the five-cent piece, and something more, and more and more. Then he passed around the great room, walking still unsteadily, and the gentleman who gave the five cents and all the gentlemen put something into the young man's hat.

So when he came back to the table, he emptied

the hat and counted the money, and truly, it was forty dollars.

*"Forty dollars!"*

Mary Elizabeth looked frightened.

"It's yours," said the young man. "Now, come to supper. But see! this gentleman who gave you the five-cent piece shall take care of the money for you. You can trust *him*. He's got a wife, too. But we'll come to supper, now."

"Yes, yes," said the gentleman, coming up. "She knows all about every orphan in this city, I believe. *She*'ll know what ought to be done with you. *She*'ll take care of you."

"But Jo will wonder," said Mary Elizabeth loyally. "I can't leave Jo. And I must go back and thank Mrs. O'Flynn for the shed."

"Oh, yes, yes; we'll fix all that," said the gentleman, "and Jo, too. A little girl with forty dollars need n't sleep in a cow-shed. But don't you want your supper?"

"Why, yes," said Mary Elizabeth; "I do."

So the young man took her by the hand, and the gentleman whose wife knew all about what to do with orphans took her by the other hand, and one or two more gentlemen followed, and they all went out into the dining-room, and put Mary Elizabeth in a chair at a clean white table, and asked her what she wanted for her supper.

Mary Elizabeth said that a little dry toast and a cup of milk would do nicely. So all the gentlemen laughed. And she wondered why.

And the young man with the brown curls laughed, too, and began to look quite happy. But he ordered

chicken, and cranberry sauce, and mashed potatoes, and celery, and rolls, and butter, and tomatoes, and an ice cream, and a cup of tea, and nuts, and raisins, and cake, and custard, and apples, and grapes — and Mary Elizabeth sat in her pink dress and red shawl, and ate the whole; and why it didn't kill her nobody knows; but it didn't.

The young man with the face that might have been beautiful — that might yet be, one would have thought who had seen him then — stood watching the little girl.

“She's preached me a better sermon,” he said, below his breath; “better than all the ministers I ever heard in all the churches. May God bless her! I wish there were a thousand like her in this selfish world!”

And when I heard about it, I wished so, too.

## ANNIE LAURIE.

THE outcry of the coming tide was pealing in. It had the resonance of a heavy sea ; one could hear it a mile further into the town than one expected, and felt a sense of surprise at the depth of the tone. The ocean was quite gray. The sky seemed rather to take than to give the universal color which hung upon the village and the headland, and gathered against the breakwater with a force and an importance that made the impression of a waste of sadness ; as if the world had filled up and brimmed over with it, and had gone into gray as people go into mourning ; that being the easiest way of recognizing what there was nothing to be said about. The effect was heightened by the prevailing tones of the granite which filled the landscape. The great quarries in the background gaped into a gray earth ; the cars which rolled or trundled by were loaded with massive grayness ; so the sloops that lay at anchor in the little artificial harbors ; the wharves were piled with gray paving, regularly disposed, making rectangular outlines against the sky, which hung close, like a curtain of a shade darker than the stone, against it. Derricks, lifting gray blocks, cut the gray air on either side of the street, where the stone-dust blew about under the hammers of the paving cutters. Granite houses presented their unrelenting



faces to the severe harmony of the scenery ; and the breakwater itself, a solemn gray figure like a sarco-phagus, stretched drearily out into the disturbed sea.

There was no fog. The face of the ocean was distinctly to be seen, furrowed with black wrinkles. Against the breakwater the surf leaped high ; tongues of white flame licked the edge of the great granite dike and blazed up. The day was so gray that these dazzled the eye like the sunlight for which they were the substitute. The rocks, wet with an immense sweep of spray, glittered ; they had not been frosted for some days, but now the night was turning cold. It was the 24th of December, and in Stoneport.

Stoneport lies far down the index finger of the Massachusetts coast, and has a right to its climate. God and the fishermen know what that is. Paralyzed with the weather, the long arm of the Cape stretches into midwinter, and bears the cold like dead flesh. When a gentle mood like that of this Christmas week comes to Stoneport in winter the people lift their eyes to the breakwater, glance at the bows of the boats to see which way the wind points, look to their little piles of coal, cut lasting for their windows, get out the children's woollen tippets, and say, " This is a weather-breeder ; I wish your father was ashore."

It had been a singularly gentle week, peaceful and almost warm ; purple mist throbbed and melted in yellow air, and the snow fled ; the water had warm loving colors — April colors of blue and violet and tender browns ; and the kelp palpitated on the red rocks over on the headland by the light-house as if

it breathed ; the quarrymen worked one day in their woollen shirtsleeves. Clearly this was well over now. The wind had set its teeth into the east, and all the world gathered itself for the coming storm.

The quarrymen had their share of Stoneport weather, be it understood ; they understood it. It was no light job to be a fisherman, perhaps ; but there were other people in the world than fishermen. Three hundred men looked up at the offended sky from the great quarries and works of Stoneport, and said, each man to himself or to his neighbor, according to his temperament, " We 're goin' to have a spell of weather."

It was sometimes pretty cold chipping stone in winter in Stoneport, but it was not fashionable for the quarrymen to complain. There were a good many Scotch among them. They had reserve and pride — a man attended to his own business and took his own risks ; he was not an object of pity to summer visitors or newspaper reporters ; he respected his calling, and defended it ; he was even in the habit of comparing it with others, to the disadvantage of any man not privileged to be a Stoneport quarryman. Grievances he had ; but he did not babble about them ; he treated them with a guarded reticence, as cultivated people do their physical infirmities, and brought his hammer down upon your question to remind you that *his* time and skill were marketable commodities. Every line in his heavily chiseled face, which looked as if his own tools had hacked at it for half a century, expressed skepticism as to the national usefulness of any person who had nothing better to do than to ask why he called his

stand a "berth," or how deep a quarry was. Nevertheless, in the winter it was cold cutting granite in Stoneport.

"We'll have the quarry to shovel come mornin'," observed an authoritative-looking, square-built fellow from the bottom of the busiest pit in town. They were loading the derrick as he spoke; it groaned like a living thing beneath its mighty burden as the huge slab swung around and off into the snowy air. The men watched it with glances of something like sympathy, as if they felt a kinship between themselves and the straining, senseless thing. They were muscular men, most of them, and bent to their work sturdily.

"You're out there, Washington Rock," a cheerful voice made answer from the door of the engine-house. "I'd like to see the Granite Company that 'ud set *you* shovelin' on a holiday."

"Christmas! I forgot it; that's the gospel truth. She's got up some kinder rinktum for us to remember it by, Herself; hain't she, Jefferson? I wonder I forgot it."

"It's a kind of a party; it's a gatherin' at Her house. It's the day She celebrates," replied another, chafing his ears briskly, for it was undeniably growing cold and colder. "I had a letter myself for an invite. It was written on 't: 'Mr. Madison Rock. R. S. V. P.' My woman said them two fust letters meant 'Rite Soon,' but what 'V. P.' stood for she warn't so sure. Say, Monroe, what did you make on 't? Did you have one?"

"Stands to sense I had one," growled Monroe from the pit's stairway. "Did ye ever know Her to slight

anybody or sarse anybody? She's the only person I ever knew that treated me like a gentleman sence I was born a quarryman. Lord bless her! My girl," he added, with an air of not being too proud to mention it — "my girl's been to high school two seasons, and she says 'V. P.' means 'Very Prompt;' that's what that stands for. But there's a girl alongside of her that's been to Boston, who says it stands for 'Verse of Poetry.'"

The other men listened with deference. The Rock boys were held in great respect in the quarry; there were four of them, two brothers, two cousins, named by patriotic parents in the Presidential order mentioned. The Rock boys had always felt the dignity of their names, and perceived that they had something to live up to. They did not get drunk; they had money at the savings-bank; they "bossed" the rest of the gang as a matter of course. Now and then an old Scotchman by the name of Dawse rebelled faintly, and there was a Finlander who had lost one eye by an explosion, reported to be "worth something" himself, and maintaining on both grounds a certain right to private opinion.

"There's a book of etikwette at our house on top shelf somewheres along of the Bible and the cook-book," said Washington Rock. "It ain't no gret of a chore to find out what 'R. S. V. P.' dooz stand for. She knows we can read, if we ain't rich."

Miss Laurie, by the way, understood the quarrymen very well in this matter. The more ceremony about her hospitality, and the less they understood it, the better they liked it.

"Yon gaes the marster," observed the Scotchman,

with the manner of one who thought the Rock boys had monopolized the conversational resources of the quarry long enough.

"Goes he to her?" asked the Finlander, dropping his drills, and casting the scrutiny of his single eye, with the intensity belonging to deficiency, over the dreary landscape. "She deserves a husband."

"She's too good for him," protested Washington Rock.

"He ain't wuth the right to tie her shoe-strings," cried Jefferson Rock.

"She'll never be married," said Madison.

"Lord forbid!" said Monroe.

"No man ain't blocked out fit for her," urged Washington Rock in a final tone.

"He goes not to her," objected the Finlander, peering between the guys of the moaning derrick. "He will turn him down the road by Satan's Pit."

"No, sir," persisted Washington Rock; "Martin Derrick's on his way to nowheres but to her."

"That's so," said Jefferson Rock.

"Bet your Sunday mornin' brown-bread on 't," said Madison, "he's after her."

"Yes," said Monroe, "he's after Annie Laurie."

"Gin he war," suggested Dawse, the Scotchman, after a severe silence, "is there a lad in these quarries to hinder the lass?"

The men did not look at each other; no one answered the old man. They were poor quarrymen, plain fellows; she of whom they spoke was not of their sort: teacher, angel, idol, but woman not for them. They thought of her as they thought of the evening star, which looked down into the quarry

through a break in the clouds from a great height, piercingly, seeing everything, but touching nowhere. Yet there was not a man among them who could have wished her married.

"Mayhap it's right ye are, boys," said the old Scotchman softly, as if he had been answered. "Gin I had the chusin' of a mon for her me ain sel', I'd sooner tak' him frae th' ither warld nor this."

Annie Laurie sat in her little music-room alone. She had the thoughts that, like wild birds, venture near the heart only when one is alone and still.

Annie Laurie was fifty-one years old — fifty-one to-morrow, for Christmas was her birthday too. She had passed the years when one is a heroine. Life was behind her. She was a heroine to nobody now except to the quarrymen, poor fellows, who idealized, she said, a little common humanity, or perhaps a bit of experimental Christianity, so easily that one could cry to think of it.

She thought of it that evening, sitting there by herself, and twisting bonbons for their Christmas party. She had done a good many things for the quarrymen, as all Stoneport knew — womanly, neighborly things, warm-hearted, courageous, and characteristic. Stoneport expected them of her, but it was the first time that she had ever invited the quarrymen, her own particular quarrymen, to a party. She was as excited about it as if she had been fifteen instead of fifty-one.

"It is the pleasantest thing I ever did in my life," she said to Mrs. Tombs; "it is delightful!"

Mrs. Tombs lived with Annie Laurie; whether



maid, mother, guide, philosopher, housekeeper, or friend, her vocation was complex. She was said to have a pretty, cheerful name — Kate or Jenny, or what not; but Mrs. Tombs and only Mrs. Tombs she was and would be. It was supposed that she conceived herself thus either to maintain that personal dignity which defies position or that which comes from it; whether one was to forget that she cooked the dinner or remember that she had been married, was never clearly proved. Authorities differed on this point; Miss Laurie yielded it without inquiry, and merrily called her Mrs. Tombs.

"It *took* you to think on't," said Mrs. Tombs. "I would n't stone a raisin for 'em, nor for no mortal human, without it was to amuse you. But, Lordy, if it amuses you!"

Mrs. Tombs had succumbed on twisting bonbons. She said it gave her an indigestion in the brain to think of it. She had gone away to look after some heavy moral responsibilities in the matter of chocolate frosting. Annie Laurie could hear Mrs. Tombs singing in the kitchen, —

"Day of wrath, that dreadful day,"

by way of Christmas carol, while she whipped the eggs. Miss Laurie herself, alone in the music-room, was submerged in waves of colored paper and in the tide of her own thoughts.

These to-night were the long thoughts of her years, the quiet thoughts with which peaceful middle age comes to anniversary days. Annie Laurie had not always been quiet; she was too handsome a woman even at fifty to have had a quiet life; and

then her eyes were too dark. They were deep as well as dark, and bright as well as deep; they flashed as easily as a September sea. She had abounding health, and sang like a morning star sometimes even now; her hair seemed to have turned gray more because it became her than because she was growing old. She had an erect figure, richly moulded, and a firm musician's hand. Her face was vivid and strong; and when she was moved in the right way it was sweet.

Strong or sweet, or brave or merry, it was impossible at Christmas time and birthday time not to remember — *How* a woman remembers! She had often prayed for a man's power of forgetting, and then prayed to be forgiven for the prayer. She knew that she would not have felt she was half a woman if she could forget. She would have scorned herself as if she had done something rude. It was the way she was made; it was like the depth of her eyes or the quality of her soprano. Who was to help it? She had loved one man, and he had died. Her story was the story of her country. Twenty-one, almost twenty-two years ago, Annie Laurie was one of those who "gave their happiness instead." He gave his life; she knew it was the easier portion; she never said so, lest she should seem to undervalue his share of their sacrifice or overvalue hers. They loved each other, and he went to the war.

They had loved much — being so young; and she had thought he would come through somehow and come back to her. She really had. It was her ardent, vigorous nature to do so. She hoped easily, or at least deeply; she did not believe that George

would be killed. She had expected to be happy. She always had been. She had known the glad youth of health and ease and beauty. It was new to have to suffer. She had to learn how.

Theirs had been one of the natural, happy betrothals whereunto all the common currents of life set easily. Friends had blessed and circumstances had laughed. Annie Laurie was the daughter of the village doctor. George Cliff was in the Granite Company — *was* the Granite Company after his father died. (And the Granite Company failed during the war; after he was shot.) Her lover was older than she. They had known each other half their lives, ever since Dr. Laurie bought out the old deaf doctor's practice. Everybody was glad to have them marry. Their personal preference seemed really only the official expression of public opinion; that was delightful. The handsome girl was well liked in Stoneport even then; she had her father's hearty way with people, though she did not trouble herself about the quarrymen in those days. She was too merry a girl to play My Lady Bountiful. Hers had been the humanity learned at the feet of sorrow, and, like the other lessons which are taught by that thorough teacher, learned well if learned at all.

She was going down into the kitchen to give an order for her father's comfort (for she was a motherless girl) one May day, now almost twenty-two years ago, when the doctor came in and called her, in a voice which she had never heard in all her life. He met her at the head of the stairs. The entry window was open. She saw the sky and birds and the branch of the old maple. She had on a pink summer dress,

for it was warm. Blue of the sky and rose of the happy woman's robe melted into a dense violet haze between herself and her father's face. The old man held the morning paper in his shaking hand.

"Wait a minute, father," said Annie Laurie; "Jane, make the doctor's coffee *carefully* for dinner. He is tired."

Then she turned and kissed him before she put out her hand and took the paper, and went away with it alone upstairs.

It would have been something if she could have laid her lips against the grass upon her soldier's grave. But he lay among the nameless dead, six hundred miles away from her. He fell in the terrible charge at Chancellorsville, and was not seen by comrade or by friend again. She had no word, no trace. The poor girl had not even the ring she put upon his finger, nor her letters — not one of the little sacred signs that grief cheats itself upon. Jealous death had swallowed everything. He had dropped out of her life as a jewel drops into the sea.

The sorrow of the young is a cruel sorrow. Annie Laurie was strong as well as young, and she suffered as the strong do. Turn the leaf — turn the leaf upon the story, and read on.

Trouble, as we know, is one of the contagions of life. Her first was not her last, and before she had come past thirty years the brave girl had her heavy share. When the doctor took a malignant fever from a pauper patient, and yielded the struggle for life at a week's end, she was not out of the black dress worn for her lover; and so she kept it on.

She was left with her house, her musical education, her voice, and a bank-account that paid the undertaker and the grocer. The week after the funeral Mrs. Tombs came in at the front door without ringing, and said: "I'm a patient. I set a store by the doctor. He cured me of a terrible thing I had the matter of me. I'd ha' ben alongside of Mr. Tombs if your father had n't pervented. You'd better believe I was thankful to mercy for that. I loved the doctor. His patients did, you know. I'll live with you if you want me to. I can get along on board wages. I'm well off, considerin' what Mr. Tombs was. I'd like to do something for my doctor's daughter."

"Thank you, Mrs. Tombs," said Annie Laurie. She went up and kissed Mrs. Tombs, and that was the beginning and end of that. In three weeks she opened her singing-school; and the summer people took vacation lessons, when they came, for their little girls. She sang in a choir in Fairharbor; she played to rich invalids; she was not unheard of at parlor concerts; she toiled over the drifts of Cape Ann in winter to give private instruction to mechanics' daughters: in short, she struggled for existence, and had it. She was a brave, busy woman. Everybody knew Annie Laurie. She was not a saint — not a bit of it; her eyes flashed too quickly. She was a live human creature; she had even a little temper of her own; she scolded her quarrymen or her pupils if they deserved it, and made up for it next time by bountiful bursts of tenderness. Although a poor woman, she had moods; she was not always the same; she gave herself the luxury of a

varied nature, and though she sometimes lost a friend because of it, she kept more than she lost. At fifty-one she was a bright-eyed, handsome, heart-some soul to look upon, with a maternal manner and the laugh of a girl.

People used to say that she would get over it and marry ; but they had, for the most part, given that up now. She had been beloved, of course, as most women are ; times not a few, as such women are. But she had followed her solitary life as one follows a page that is to be read.

Martin Derrick, coming up to her door that night, looked in from the threat of the storm to the caress of the house with heavy, hungry eyes. He could see her before he entered, for the curtain was not quite close, and even blew in the gasps of the rising gale that puffed through the loose, old-fashioned window-casings.

"She needs a carpenter here for a week," he thought. She made merry of her economies ; one would have thought they were her luxuries ; but it went hard with him to look on and see them.

She sat alone in the lamp-light (there was a rose-colored shade upon the lamp), with her fine fingers — whiter for the colors of the gay paper — flashing to and fro at her Christmas work. She sat erect and strong.

Her brave face was bent ; it had a sweet mute look. He wondered of what she was thinking. Her thoughts seemed to him something precious and far, like the setting or the rising of the sun. He was a plain, busy man, who wrought in stone and lived a little rigidly. The granite of his quarries had got



into him, one might say ; his mind was well stratified. He knew what he wished ; he usually had it. He had desired success, and got it ; fortuné, it came ; marriage, and his wife adored him ; children, and they were fine fellows — never fell sick and never went wrong. He had always prospered. He expected matters to go as he chose to have them. Nothing had ever thwarted Martin Derrick in all his life but death and Annie Laurie.

For Mrs. Derrick died, and Annie Laurie — He was a plain man, as I say, not given to that uncommercial weakness which we call imagination ; but Annie Laurie seemed as far from him, at her nearest, as the color or the approach of the sky. He thought of her with the reverence with which a baffled man thinks of the unattainable ; it amounts to religion in some men, and practically serves many of the same purposes.

This did not affect his general belief that a thing which was not to be had for the asking was to be had by persisting. This was the natural belief of a successful man. When he came in that night and sat down by her and looked at her serene and stately face, his hands clinched.

Good God ! he thought, if the heart of the solid earth could be hewn out and cut to pieces, and made to serve the human will, as he had seen it, as he had *felt* it, all his days and in all his being, could not the tenderness of one solitary woman be won ? What was a man a man for if he could not do it ? Why was a woman a woman unless she needs must yield ? He brought his lips together under his gray beard, and watched her without disguise ; she knew

how it was with him; there was no passion either to conceal or to confess between them.

"I don't see," he said, with the abrupt candor of long acquaintance, "that you look a day older than you did when you were thirty-five. Of course you know that you are a handsome woman, though I don't know that I have talked about that. But to-night — what ails you to-night?"

"It is because I feel so young, I think," laughed Annie Laurie, turning her fine gray head in the penumbra of the rose-colored lamp. "I am fifty-one to-morrow, and fifty-one of my boys are coming to a birthday party with Mrs. Tombs and me on Christmas night. Will you come too? That will be delightful."

"I never knew anybody do such delicate things for rough people." He touched the dainty trifle she was twisting, with a tremor in his strong hand. "You cast your precious pearls before" —

"No, no!" she cried; "I have never felt the tusks — never once. You *know* better than that, Martin Derrick. How was it in the strike last winter? Did they behave like" —

"They behaved like lambs led at your feet by a piece of blue ribbon," admitted the master of the Granite Company. "You saved the Company a hundred thousand dollars; and the hands — but the thing of it was, they *could n't* understand what you saved *them*. They took the trouble to keep out of ruin and starvation and the poor-house, with no idea in their skulls except that they were doing a favor to you." He brought his clinched hands down heavily upon the table among the bonbons.

"So they were," said Annie Laurie; "the greatest they could do me. I was very much obliged to them. It was delightful." She repeated this favorite phrase in the hearty girlish way she had.

The senior partner of the Granite Company smiled. "You attempt to reduce the whole tremendous labor problem which is convulsing the world to-day to the solution found in the influence of one extraordinary woman. That is not political economy."

"On the contrary, I reduce it to the solution wrought out by one extraordinary man," returned Annie Laurie, in a low voice.

"Who is that?" he asked, forgetting himself.

"He died some nineteen centuries ago," she answered gently.

"Oh, if you make a religious question of it" — He waved his hand lightly, but the look in his gray eyes was not light. Perhaps Miss Laurie's way of speaking had the more weight because she was not exactly what is called in Stoneport "a pious woman," dealt more in flannels than in tracts, and was more apt to bring you beef tea than a Bible; was so destitute of a "gift in prayer" that it was said but one poor woman, a paralytic, whose only child had been killed by a premature blast, had ever heard that strong, merry, merciful voice pleading for the help of God.

"I have offered no political economy to the Stoneport Granite Company," she said. "I have nothing for anybody, be he in the quarry or in the counting-room, but a little good sense that I happened to find in the New Testament. I have never done anything

for your quarrymen except to love them and to scold you."

"And I," he slowly said, "have done little but reverse the process. I have scolded them and loved"—

"Hark!" cried the woman; "I thought I heard—did you hear anything? Anything outside—in the storm?"

For the storm was rising now, and the night was growing wild. She went to the window and flung it up with one strong hand. The wind rushed in, and snow; it was turning deadly cold. The fierce cry of the sea filled the air, and battled with the sound of the gale, and beat it down, and conquered it.

"There is nothing," she said restlessly—"nothing else. I thought I heard"—

She shut the window and came back. Snow was on her hair and her black dress; she glittered in the red light by the lamp; her cheeks blazed; she looked like one who has the secret of eternal youth. His heart arose and worshiped her. His love came upon him with the power of the passion of middle life. But he only said: "You sing to the men sometimes. Give one song to the master, won't you? You know the one I like—everybody likes—to hear you sing. Let me have it, please, for Christmas' sake."

She acquiesced, silently moving to her little upright piano, looking gentle, dumb, and sorry. Her rich voice slowly rose and swelled and filled the warm, small room, which seemed to throb with it, like a heart.

"Maxwelton's braes are bonnie  
Where early fa's the dew,

And it's there that Annie Laurie  
Gied me" —

She dashed the music down and broke away.

"I can't. Not to-night. Not even for Christmas' sake. Don't ask me. Don't want it. Don't" —

"Don't love you? But you know I do." His square, gray-bearded jaw trembled; he put out his hands, but did not touch her. He thought how happy he would have tried to make her; he thought how hard her life was. It seemed to him as if his love and her loneliness would break his heart.

As if she understood and answered what he did not say, she raised her troubled eyes and looked at him piteously. "You are a good man, Martin Derrick. I am fond of you. I never liked any other man so much — except — but" —

"I should not ask you to give me the feeling you gave that dead man," he urged.

She lifted her head. The blush of fifteen came upon the cheek of fifty years.

"Could a woman be a man's wife, and not feel — like that? It is n't my fault," she added, timidly; "I can't help it. I can't *help* being true to him."

The man of granite looked at her; his eyes had the expression of a hurt boy: he thought of his luxurious home, his fortune, what people called his position, his success — all those small things; they were so small she did not think of them at all. What was great? Nothing was great to her — in all this world, in all her solitary life, her coming age, her toil and trouble, her anxieties and poverty and growing need of daily tenderness — nothing was large enough for her to see but loyal human love.

Martin Derrick brought his hand across the notes of "Annie Laurie" as if he clutched at something. He was jealous of that ghost.

"I will go," he said; and so he said no more, but hurried from her. In his heart he meant to win her yet. He loved her so much that he could be patient. As he opened the outer door the storm came in with a stampede. Feet seemed to follow it—human feet. Annie Laurie sprang.

"The cry!" she said—"the cry! There *is* a cry. Does n't anybody hear it but me? Let me come! Let me by!"

Before his wits or his hearing came to him she had sprung, and got herself past him and out into the snow. She had snatched a long cloak from somewhere, and was struggling to wrap it about her as she ran, for it dragged, and the wind took it and blew it away from her tall figure like the mantle of an Aurora on a Roman vase.

Feet, indeed, there were, and voices. In the advancing dark some of the quarrymen could be seen; they were moving to and fro with the wasted force and purpose of people in great excitement. Some of them turned irresolutely, then came pushing and rushing toward the music-teacher's house. Some one cried:—

"Annie Laurie! Call *Her*. Send for Annie Laurie!"

Washington Rock, with a boy close at his feet, and the Finlander panting behind, dashed up.

"There's a man in the pit—Satan's Pit—the old pit."

"Why, but he must be got *out*!" said Miss Laurie.



"Get the men to work, and keep your wits, and don't bother the lady, Rock," said Martin Derrick. "It's no place for her. Go back to the house, Miss Laurie. I will attend to everything. Go. — Come, Washington."

His voice had the master's ring; but the man glanced at him with the sly smile of unemployed opinion.

"She'll go," he said. "She'd rather."

They were plunging on together through the fast-drifting snow, for no time had been lost in words. She had paid no more attention to Derrick's suggestion than if it were a snow-flake that she brushed away from her. She was used to being with the quarrymen in their emergencies — sickness, accident, whatever it was; they expected her. Their homes knew her, their wives loved her, their rascals feared her, their children kissed her; she was a part of their life, as delicate womanhood may become a part of the life of rough manhood, as love and wisdom and strength can become a part of suffering and ignorance and weakness. It was a matter of course. Nobody thought anything of it. If a wedding happened, or a burial, why, where was Annie Laurie? If a blast exploded too soon and hit in the wrong place, and somebody must hold him and catch the last words, and then go and tell the widow — send for Annie Laurie. If a man fell over a disused pit on a winter's night, sheer a hundred feet into the icy water — Annie Laurie! Annie Laurie!

"She comes!" called the Finlander. He rolled on ahead, to show that he could run as fast as any man, if he was a foreigner. "I see," he added, with

the comfortable tone of one who argued that two eyes were therefore a superfluity.

"We've got her," cried the boy, who had gained upon them all; "we've got Annie Laurie."

It was longer than it should have been to Satan's Pit. It had never seemed so long before. Derrick held her up as they ran on together, but they wasted no strength in speech; she knew she should need it all. It was very dark. The lights in the lowly houses on the lonely street shone faintly through the snow. It was very slippery, for it had glazed over. Beyond the village the uttermost, nethermost blackness of the sea-line yawned like a chaos or chasm into which the whole world must sink. The rage of the full tide filled ocean, earth, and sky.

Yonder, nearer, more near, at last, the lanterns of the little group of startled quarrymen trembled upon the edge of the disused pit.

"The feller was a stranger," piped the boy, in his shrill treble. "He never knew nobody used Satan in these parts these days. Madison Rock says that's how he come to tumble in."

"Nobody but a fool or a furriner would ha' thought on 't," said Washington Rock, as decisively as a heavy man may speak who is running for dear life — not his own. The Finlander took untimely offense at this, and threatened to give his reasons at a more convenient season; but Miss Laurie paid no attention to this military episode.

As she ran, hand in hand with Martin Derrick, vigorously battling with the storm as she knew how, the sleet was sharp upon her face, the deadly peril of a human life was on her nerves, but her heart went strange ways.

Two-and-twenty were the years of the way it went. The night was warm, for it was June. The moon looked as it looks to the young and to the loving. On the edge of the old pit they stood together — they two, she who was living and he who was dead — and gazed down. The pit was in use then; the derricks were busy, the abyss was dry; they had grown up with it; they were not afraid of it; they wandered about it with the affectionate familiarity that we give to usual things. It was a place to be alone in, that was all. It was a pleasant place to be alone in on a summer night, and she wore a white dress, and he liked it; the moon shone in her face when she lifted it to him, and they walked and talked a little while; and when she said she must go home, for her father would be in, and need her, he had said, "I love thee, Annie," and she had answered —

"Here we are!" said Washington Rock.

"Here we be!" cried the boy.

"We come!" panted the Finlander.

But Martin Derrick had let go her hand, and made on, and got among the men.

With the supple motion and the practiced power learned of two-and-twenty years, her heart rebounded. Her lips moved; no sound came from them; but afterward she remembered that to herself she said: "George, I want to save this man. Help me, won't you?" Then she drew her hood back from her face, and walked quietly in among the men — went straight to the edge of the pit and looked down.

Half-a-dozen sprang to hold her; it was deadly

slippery, and the wind blew so! They cried out that it was all up with him—that they had done their best; that Madison Rock had clambered half-way down; that two Scotchmen had tried; that it was so glazed over, and death to go; that nothing could be done. Mr. Derrick himself admitted that he feared the worst, but he busied himself in giving short, sharp orders—something about ropes, and the stairway in the rock. The men obeyed or made a feint of obeying the master, but they glanced at Annie Laurie.

She, shuddering upon the pit's edge, stood during all this protest, silently looking down.

"But the man is not in the water," she said, in a low voice; "he is clinging to the rock—he holds to the quarry. He is alive. He can be saved."

"He has slipped," somebody whispered behind her—"he has slipped from there,—to there, since we first saw him."

"An' there's fifty foot of ice-water in the pit."

"Gin I war fifty year younger, I'd doon for the mon me ain sel', by me lane!" cried old Dawse, stamping the icy snow.

"Ay, ay," muttered a voice; "but would ye send yer lad? Come, now; that's the question."

The little boy who had run on with the Finlander stood by, silently. He had the muscle and the eyes of children who work in the stone-yards; he was compact, like a miniature man, and observed everything. He did not speak, but went and stood by the old Scotchman; he drew himself to his full height, and locked his hands behind his little back.

"Charley," said his father, "if there's onything a lad can do to save the mon, I'll no forbear ye."

"I'd just as liefs," said Charley.

A sort of huzza arose at this, stifled below breath lest the outburst should startle the poor wretch below. Annie Laurie, who had till now remained peering over the pit's edge at the sickening sight, turned, and suddenly leaning over, threw the full force of her powerful voice off and down into the pit.

"Have hope!" she cried. "Have courage! Hold on for your life! Hold on! The Stoneport quarrymen will save you! Hold on! Hold on!"

"There, boys," she said, turning about; "I've pledged you to it."

"Ye hae no bairns to feed like we," said one of the Scotchmen who had tried the descent and failed to make it.

"Give me the rope!" cried Annie Laurie, towering in a passion. "Put it round me, some of you, and let me down, for by all that's brave in man or woman I'll not stand on this pit's edge and see a human being perish, and not a hand in Stoneport stretched to save him! I'd *rather* die!"

Murmurs ran around from man to man. They looked at her—they were accustomed to believe she was right; it was a habit to trust her.

"You're pretty hard on us," one voice said.

"I can go myself," answered Martin Derrick. He thought of those boys of his—motherless. He wondered if she remembered them.

"I'll go," said Washington Rock. "Mr. Derrick, sir, you ain't young enough. It ain't sootable. I'll go."

"I'll try," said Madison Rock.

"No," said Jefferson; "you and Monroe hain't no call; you are married men. Washington and me can manage."

"I come," said the Finlander, after a moment's hesitation.

It was not as long as it takes in the telling before this inevitable delay gave place to urgent action. Under Derrick's directions the volunteers moved as quickly as might be to the forgotten, disused stairway cut in the solid cliff, up and down which men had passed, on happier business than this, two-and-twenty years ago.

Lights flashed, cables swung, orders rang out, answers came; but Annie Laurie looked on, trembling and tortured. Her heart was breaking for her men, whom her voice had sent upon this doom. She cried out and followed them, weeping like a very woman.

"Boys! oh, boys! I had no right to treat you so. I should n't have *shamed* you to your duty. I'd go myself, and thank you for the chance to take your places. Brave boys! my brave boys!"

"We'd ought to do it," Washington Rock made answer, slowly, as they adjusted the rope about his waist. "It ain't proper to see a fellar-critter drowned before your eyes — of a night before Christmas, too — and never try to do nothin' for him. It ain't *your* fault it's so slippery."

The quarryman spoke soothingly, as he would to a troubled child; he held out his rough hand and touched hers — for she wept so — and begged her not to mind, and shook hands with his brother, and



said he guessed he wouldn't send any message to his mother, for like as not he'd come out all right. And so they gave the rope out, and he went down.

The ruined condition of the stairway, and the ice that covered everything, made the descent dangerous and solemn. The volunteer was so far protected as a stout rope and a score of men to hold it at the pit's edge could protect; but they could see that he clung like a goat for his footing, and that it went hard with him. The danger, which all recognized, but of which no one spoke, lay in the chafing of the rope against the icy edges of the pit. — If it should cut?

Annie Laurie, leaning over and looking steadily down, was the first to see the quarryman stop, and crawling from the stairway to the ledge below, come perilously out from the deeper shadow to the paler one, whereon, an atom between dark and dark, a heart-throb between the frozen rock and freezing gulf, the huddled figure lay.

The cry came up; "He is hurt; he ain't conscious. I must have help."

Madison Rock, tied in like manner with the other, went down without a word. The little Scotch boy came forward and pleaded to be allowed to follow: "I'd just as liefs as not. I ain't so big as some, but I can stick pretty tight. I've played hide-'n'-seek on that ledge. It ain't very broad — for a *large* man."

"Run for a doctor, Charley," said Miss Laurie; "you'll go faster than any other man."

Soothed to the soul by these last two inspired words, Charley smiled and ran.

One who was peering down from the quarry's edge could perceive that the men were having a hard time of it with their brave deed. They seemed to experience great difficulty in getting the rope about the body of the unconscious man, in traversing the space back to the stairway, in deciding what to do and how to do it, in all the terrible perplexity of the terrible moments which seemed without an end to those who watched above. Above and below, it had grown significantly still. No one spoke. Mr. Derrick gave his orders by signs. He kept a clear head, and thought of everything. The men, from habit, obeyed quickly. The savage cry of the ocean pealed on. The wind had abated or lulled a little, but snow still fell steadily. Once a piece of ice broke, and dropped into the gulf. Annie Laurie could hear it splash into the black water. The lantern which she had taken and held at arm's-length shuddered in the snowy air, and sent a little sickly light over and down the chasm. Dawse, the Scotchman, stood close to her, and kept his hand upon her. She stood too near the edge. "I winna let her doon," he said to the men. He felt that the heaviest responsibility of the rescue rested upon him; only *here* was preciousness in peril. What was the life of yonder pauper in the pit? Was there a creature in the whole world who cared? Not so much as a fule lassie to greet for him. But Annie Laurie! — oh, Annie Laurie!

The cry came up: "We're afraid we can't do it!"

Her cry went down: "Boys, you *can* do it! It must be done!"

The cry came up: "He's pretty heavy; he don't know anytbing; he can't help himself any."

The cry went down: "Boys, bring me up the poor man! Bring him up as if he were my brother! Handle him as if I cared — *Treat him, boys, as if I loved him!*"

"Sing," said old Dawse softly; "sing to the lads while they do the deed. Ye'll hearten 'em."

"Ay, ay!" somebody made answer. "She sings to us times we're workin' in th' quarry. They're used to it; they'll like it."

"Oh, perhaps," wailed Annie Laurie, wringing her hands passionately; "but I'd rather be risking my life in the pit beside them than to stay safe up here and sing at them."

"It is the lassie's place," replied the Scotchman, — "it is the lassie's part."

With this she stood erect, and throwing her long cloak back that she might be quite unimpeded in her motions, poured all her courage into her fine voice, and so began:—

"Maxwelton's braes are bonnie" —

The cry came up from the pit: "Ay, ay! Sing! That's right. Sing!"

The song went down:—

"Maxwelton's braes are bonnie,  
Where early fa's the dew,  
And it's there that Annie Laurie  
Gied me her promise true."

She sang and saw not — did not trust herself any longer now to see; knew that the quarrymen were ascending with their burden bravely, like the men they were, perilously as they must — but only kept "the lassie's part;" and standing high above them, tall against the sky, sang on:—

“And it’s there that Annie Laurie  
Gied me her promise true,  
Gied me her promise true,  
Which ne’er forgot will be,  
And for bonnie Annie Laurie  
I’d lay me dune and dee.  
Which ne’er forgot will be,  
Which ne’er forgot will be.”

“It is all over,” said Martin Derrick, coming up and trying to wrap her cloak about her, for she had now begun to shiver visibly, whether from horror or from cold. “They have come up. They are safe. Nobody is hurt. Go home now.”

“I suppose I must see the man,” she said, shrinking. “Is he dead?”

“Only fainted, I think, and hurt upon the arm and head; but really not much. It is one of the incredible escapes. I would n’t look at him.”

“Oh, yes,” she answered in a strange tone. “I must look at him.”

His face was turned away when she saw him, and the men said he looked badly, and advised her to leave him to them. He was a man of perhaps sixty years or so; his hair was quite white; he was a poor man, it seemed, scantily dressed, cruelly unprotected from the weather, from which he must have perished, even though uninjured, soon enough. He was some piteous, friendless creature, just the one, as they all knew, to set her sweet soul beside itself with sympathy.

When she had looked at him she said, authoritatively, “Bring him to my house.”

Some one objected, but no one disobeyed. She turned in silence and walked on ahead of them, and

they followed her with their burden, and so brought him to her door.

Mrs. Tombs (so she said) was sorely put about on Christmas morning. As though it were not enough to have chocolate cake for quarrymen upon one's hands, that a frozen pauper should be added, and Annie Laurie herself, suddenly gone, by the mysterious dispensation of Providence, as helpless as other folks. For Annie Laurie had no sooner got the poor wretch across her threshold than she had dropped him from her personal attention, as though he had been a gentleman.

The men, she said, would do everything, and Mrs. Tombs. The doctor would see to it all, and Mrs. Tombs should keep one of the Rock boys to do whatever was needed. She complained of feeling ill after all the shock and exertion, and got herself into her own room and locked her door. But when Mrs. Tombs came to it hours after to tell her that the man had come out of his faint spells, and for her part, she thought he was n't hurt any more than he ought to be, and what in the name of goodness to gracious was she to do with a tramp in her spare room come mornin' ? Annie Laurie unlocked the door and let the elder woman in, and, for the first time in all the years that they had lived together, put her strong arms about the other's neck, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"It is the resemblance!" she cried. "Oh, it is the resemblance! I am used to them; I see a great many, — all these years. Sometimes in the city on a street — or perhaps it is a face at church. It's just

a look, something in the hair, or the way they move their head, or the color of something, or the eyes. For twenty-two years I've seen them. But *this* one — I was worn out, and it came so suddenly ! I've behaved badly," she added, kissing the old woman, and smiling girlishly through her tears. "I was so tired ; I've left too much to come on you. To-morrow I will see him ; I will attend to everything ; I will see the poor fellow in the morning."

In the morning it was as she had said. The injured man was quite comfortable, they told her, only weak and silent. They could make but little out of him ; he seemed confused or troubled ; he had asked whose house he was in.

The storm had now ceased, but the day was bitterly cold, and fires in that plain house few. Mrs. Tombs had got her unwelcome guest over into the music-room, and left him there alone, where it was warm ; and there, in the broad, bleak day-light, sitting on the sofa, with his poor head bound, and his arm in a sling, and staring toward her, Annie Laurie found him.

She shut the door and locked it. Why, she could not tell. She shut the door and went halfway across the room, and then — stood still.

It was no resemblance. God of mystery ! God of mercy ! it was no resemblance. None of those tricks and feints of imagination ; none of those cruel traps in which her weary eyes had caught her for two-and-twenty years. That pitiful figure, wan with misery, ragged, with a scared face ; old, gray, with the beautiful eyes that had won her, the eyes that neither life nor death could change — whether blessed or ac-



cursed, whether she had died or he did live, — God help her! it was past resemblance.

“*George!*” she cried, in a heart-breaking voice. They took one blind step toward each other, as the living and the dead meet in the world that is not as this. Then — for she came to herself — she stopped, threw up her arms with a terrible cry, and retreated from him.

The real meaning of the situation had come upon her. It had come like the hand of a God more cruel than the most impious thought of all her life could conceive.

“But you were dead!” she cried, in a ringing voice. “You have been a dead man for twenty-two years! I wish you were. *I wish you had been!*”

He seemed to put his hands out as if she had struck him, but she saw them not; he tried to speak, said nothing; caught at the top of the tall rocking-chair, and bowed his head before her. He did this in a way so piteous that, had she been less in mortal strait than she was, the sight must have come to her heart.

She had now gone deadly white, and stood towering above him, as men shot through a certain portion of the brain are known to keep on standing after death. As if she had been the dead and he the living soul, they parted from each other in that moment for the second time. The silence that fell between them was more cruel than the silence of the grave.

Then the woman gave one shudder, and then her words poured out: —

“You were not dead; you were alive — all these years. You did not come to me. You chose — Oh,

my gracious God! he was not dead! What shall I say to him? What does a woman say to a man who has done — such a thing?

“How cold I am! I shall die of the cold. My heart is ice. Feel my hands. No! he must not touch my hands. He did not die. He deserted me. You did not die. It is nothing, if it is only death. You see I know — I’ve borne *that*.

“Why, George” —

Her wild cry fell now into a wail that might have haunted the soul of a man as long as he had any. He made some effort or protest, as if he would have spoken or pleaded with her; but she was or seemed unconscious that he had the power of speech.

“Why, George, I loved you! I said I would be your wife. You asked me to. We loved each other. You went to the war, and you died — and I loved you. All these years I have been like — like — Why, see! I have kept your ring upon my hand. My dress is black. I have been like — like your” — Her voice sank. She covered her face with her hands.

“I can’t tell him — how it is. No, no. A woman must not tell a live man things like that. Oh, I thought I had a sorrow! I thought I had trouble because you were dead. I thought I had *suffered* — people do think so. I must tell them, I shall have to tell them, for they do not know any better. To live all your life — if he is dead — that is not *sorrow*! There is nothing hard in *that*. George Cliff, you might have left me your ghost to love. Why, I had it all — love, honor, truth — I had *all you*. *You* were not dead. You never died, you never died, you

never died till this minute here before my eyes ! Oh, you have done wrong — you should have had mercy on me. You should ” —

“ Annie,” said George Cliff, “ Annie, I have a word to say to thee.”

He advanced and gently touched her, lifting her clinched hand as indeed a spirit might.

“ Annie, my girl, I could n’t help it. Try to believe me. I have been — where I could n’t come.”

She smiled upon him in a frightful way. Her words were over ; she had spent herself ; her bitterness and scorn were going deaf and dumb.

“ Perhaps I can’t expect to be believed,” he said pathetically, “ but I have been insane. I was hurt about the head. I have been in an asylum.”

“ For twenty-two years ? ”

“ I do not know.”

“ Do not *know* ? ”

“ As God hears me — no. I cannot tell you what has happened to me. I have been — a long time — sick — confused. When I came to myself I came to you. It is hard to explain it, Annie. I’ve had a pretty hard time,” he added gently. “ Perhaps I ought n’t to have expected to be believed. I thought you’d listen to me. But I suppose it is n’t a usual case, and it tires me to talk about it. I have n’t talked much lately.”

“ Oh, as God made us two,” cried Annie Laurie, “ tell me the truth in His sight, and tell me all you can ! ”

“ It hurts me — here ; ” he put his hand to his head weakly. She began to see how shattered, what a wreck he was ; the force of his incredible words

urged itself upon her before he uttered them; but she stood apart until she had heard them all; and so he spoke to her.

He told her such of the pitiful tale as his ruined memory served him to. It was a strange and broken story. Perhaps in the records of the civil war there may be stranger, but no sadder can be found.

He supposed, he said, it must be thus. That he had been left for dead upon the field, wounded in the head, captured in the delirium of surgical fever, and made maniac, or kept so, in some of those prisons of theirs; but he could not swear to her, for, before God, he did not know. This was his belief. He had further the belief that he must have escaped, perhaps got himself into some enemy's disguise, and, still being as he was, had been swept into some county hospital of the dark, old-fashioned type, where he had been detained, and no doubt with cause enough, for years more than he had means of counting, and treated — as he was. He remembered something of the experience and something of what befell him after. He thought he must have had periods of comparative sanity, in their turn succeeded by attacks of the other, produced by his despair of freedom. But the great trouble, he thought, had been with his memory.

The fate, not unknown to medical history, which, after wounds, fever, and hardships, paralyzes the memory, had come upon him. His past was gone; with it his home, his name.

He thought he had again escaped. Perhaps there was a fire; he seemed to remember a fire, and that an old patient was burned; but whether he escaped

or was discharged he could not say. That he had been free for several years he thought was true. He thought he had wandered westward and back again. Once he had been put in a county-house again; that was in Pennsylvania somewhere. There, he said, he had been cared for. He thought there must have been real medical skill; he was fond of the superintendent. One of the doctors said to another one day, "It is loss of identity." The words made an impression on him; he did not forget them. He grew better; they were kind to him. He told them what came into his mind, and he thought he must have told a straight story, and that in time they had discharged him; but as to that he could not say. He was quite sure that he had never been able to give them his name. He had tried hard to remember his name; it was probable that he had invented something when it served a purpose. He had tramped for a living, had worked in the fields and on the roads, as such cases do; he did not know how he got along. He tried a place in a store one cold week somewhere, but he could not make change, and they turned him off. His memory was always the trouble. He used to wish he could remember where he came from. When he escaped he always thought he should get home; it disappointed him that he never did. As he grew physically stronger, in the open air so much, and with his freedom and the hard muscular exercise, he said that he could remember how he struggled to remember, and that by degrees he seemed to catch and miss at something, but it did not come. Still he remained a man without a past. Sometimes he had strange, strong thoughts of rocks, a quarry,

the sea; but these were confused, and gave him distress when he had them; he did not cultivate them.

"One day," he said, "it was evening, and I had mowed all day on a man's farm. It was sunset, and all the men were tired. It was a bright night. We started to go up over the pasture—for I remember that very well—in a long row, in a little foot-path, single file. Every man carried his scythe, and I saw the sun flash on the blades before me as I walked along. The men began to sing, while we were walking, to keep their courage up, for we were very tired. I was tired—tired in the body; but my head was cool and quiet. The men began to sing. They sang those lines you know:—

" ' Her face it is the fairest  
That e'er the sun shone on. . . .  
And she's a' the world to me.' "

When I heard that, I stopped short behind the men, and I said, 'Good God!' for the song they sang was 'Annie Laurie.' And it came upon me. My memory came upon me, like the brook that flowed across the field, quiet and trickling, and then as clear as clean water underneath the sky. I put down my scythe, and fell upon my knees, and lifted up my hands, and said: 'That is her name. Annie—Annie Laurie. That is my dear girl's name.' And then I said, flash! like that, '*George Cliff!* Annie Laurie, Annie Laurie, Annie Laurie! *She's a' the world to you!*'

"So my memory came upon me from that hour, and I arose and came to thee.—You must do as you think best about believing in me, Annie," he added pitifully.



But she had sunken slowly, inch by inch, till she fell upon her knees, till she crawled upon the floor before him, and laid her cheek upon his ragged shoe.

The quarrymen had their Christmas party, notwithstanding. In all the shock and solemn strangeness of what befell her, she did not forget them, and wished it to be so. She put away her black dress, and stood among them in a gown of white wool, looking unfamiliar to them, and remote, as one who knew not whether she were of the dead or living. It was a suggestion of the long burden which love, the burden-bearer and burden-easer, would bring to her in such strangely heavy measure, that the sick man was too ill to be present.

The startled word of what had come to her had gone abroad among the men. They received it as the Sadducees received the resurrection. She tried to tell them how it was, herself, but her strength failed her, and she asked Washington Rock to speak for her. He did the best he could. Despite themselves, the quarrymen looked skeptical and sober; they muttered about the crazy man, and the care she took upon herself; that he was likely to have spells. Who knew what he would do in them? And his folks and his property were gone; he'd be a burden to her. And thus, and thus, and so.

"Come, boys," said Washington Rock, "give her joy! You'd oughter. It is the Lord's doing, and it ain't for the like of us to argefy upon His miracles. If He takes the trouble to work 'em in Palestyne or Massachusetts, that ain't our lookout. It's His'n. Give her joy, boys! Don't you think she needs it?"

Come! Think of the years she's been in and out amongst us — in our homes, amongst our wives and children and our old folks, when we was sick, and when we was well and happy, or if we was in trouble — she so different; she going home after it by herself, not like us; nobody that you might call her own. And now this that has happened, it has happened, boys; and the lad she has been true to ever since we knowed her, he was dead and is n't, and the hand of God was heavy on him. She says for me to tell you that they will spend their old age together, please God, and that she will care for him, and do for him, and be a good wife to him, and be a happy creetur like other human creeturs, and that she'd like our love and blessin' — and I believe that's all. And I, for one, say, Give it to her — give it to her hearty!"

"Well," said Madison Rock, "we'll give it hearty."

"We bless her," said Monroe and Jefferson.

"I bless," said the Finlander.

"Amen," sobbed Mrs. Toombs.

"Hooroar!" cried Charley Dawse; "I'd just as liefs."

"I've said the word before the day," said the old Scotchman, "gin I had the chusin' of a mon for her, I'd sooner tak' him frae t'ither warld nor this."

"May God Almighty bless her!" said Martin Derrick, last of all. But he went out and walked to and fro upon the heavy snow, in the still, cold Christmas night. It was quite still. It was very cold. The tide was going out. There was no wind. Against the dark sea-line the darker finger of the breakwater

pointed to the east. The quarries yawned black, like gulfs of silence, into which one might drop something articulate, and lose it for all time. He wondered that he had ever been jealous of a ghost.

## THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

### AN EASTER STORY.

THE Governor of the State was eating kidgeree.

Now, as is well known, the Governor is popularly supposed to breakfast on turbot, reed-birds, sweet-breads, croquettes, black Hamburg grapes, and, in general, a *menu* so expensive as to justify the taxes. The simple fact which I notice may, therefore, hardly be credited, but is none the less a fact; and, as it has an indirect connection with the events of our story, it is given for what it is worth.

For the Governor, like most of our republican rulers, having once been a man of simple life, had never entirely outgrown the tastes of his humbler days, and it was his pleasure now and then to gratify them. This he did at the cost of some mild difference of opinion between himself and his wife; who always yielded, however (since it was not an important point), to her lord's preference in the end, and on this particular morning had even gone below and supervised the ordering of the plebeian breakfast, which the *chef*, scorning this lapse from high life, had definitely determined to burn.

"Your cook improves, my dear," said the Governor, contentedly. "This is the best kidgeree I have had since we lived opposite the factory and you used to make it yourself."

The Governor's wife, looking along the pattern of her pretty breakfast-cloth, smiled brilliantly.

"And you thought we could n't afford it because it took six eggs, I remember."

"*Two*, Mr. Masscon, two ! But then, as it used up the fish"—

"And the rice, was n't it ?"

"Yes ; it really was an economical 'left-over.' And I never saw any man enjoy anything more. Do you remember"—

"What is it, Thomas ? Not now. Let him wait, whoever it is, till the proper time, or else let him go about his business, and come again. What were you saying, my dear ?"

"Oh, nothing — no — really I have forgotten. I was only thinking of those old days. Harold was a baby then. We were so happy."

"We *were* very happy !" replied the Governor emphatically. "And that is one thing I like about kidgeree. It is full of reminiscences."

"I notice it always made you good-natured," laughed the lady. "If I wanted to gain a point with you, I should give you a kidgeree breakfast. Estimate my devotion, then, by the fact that I *have* no point to gain to-day. — Oh, Thomas ! There again ? What is the matter ?"

"I ordered you to let him go, Thomas, did n't I ?" said the Governor, in a voice of pathetic appeal.

He used to give orders with twice the authority, back in those days when he was foreman of the Whisk Broom Factory ; long before he entered the firm.

The Governor of the best State in the Union was

the most inoffensive man in the world ; compared with the proprietor of the factory that had made his fortune, he was curiously averse to the use of authority. His servants managed him easily, his inferior officers adored him, and his wife had only to smile on him.

“ Now, Thomas, what is it ? Why don’t you send the visitor away ? Tell him ” —

“ If you please, sir,” interrupted Thomas, with the respectful familiarity of an old factory hand years ago promoted to be inside man, and now aspiring to the title of Governor’s butler, “ it is n’t a him, it’s a her. I think if you was to see her, sir ” —

“ Oh, well, well,” said the Governor wearily, “ I suppose so, I suppose so ! Is she a type-writer girl ? Or an autograph fiend ? Or does she want a loan of five thousand dollars to take a university course ? Or perhaps she gives me the privilege of buying her poems. Probably she would like an office for her young man.”

“ No, sir,” said Thomas, with an injured air ; “ I should hope I had more experience, sir. I ain’t in the habit of disturbing the family at breakfast for none of *them*. All I would wish to say is, if you was to see her yourself — she says she ’s got to get away by half - past, and you ’ll understand why when you hear her errand, she says. You might take a chance peek through the crack of the reception-room door, sir, and then I could abide by your judgment, sir.”

“ Very well, Thomas, very well. I will come after breakfast. Let her sit till then. Fancy, my dear ! ” laughed the Governor, turning his round,



happy face back toward the head of his breakfast-table, "the Governor of the greatest State in the Union peeking through a crack at his own callers! There is no more sense of state in this house than there is — or — was" —

"In the Broom Factory!" nodded Mrs. Masscon. "Not as much, Henry, not as much! And *still*," added the lady thoughtfully, "we seem to be so happy!"

"*Happy!* I should think so!" repeated the Governor, with that resonant, affectionate emphasis which made him so lovable after forty years of married life.

He kissed her when he had finished his kidgeree and coffee and rolls, just as he used to do every morning, when he went to his day's work at the factory; and patted her on the cheek, — she had a handsome cheek still, — and hurried, "Herald" and "Times" in hand, busily to the reception-room to have it over with the visitor.

Now the Governor's house was large; larger than many of its kind, even in this country of private palaces. In fact, it was truly little less than a palace; a new house well designed and gorgeously apportioned. He had some distance to walk across the halls to the reception-room, which, far by the door yonder, commanded a glimpse of the family breakfast-room. Seen at that distance, and in the freshets of sunshine overflowing the room, it had a dazzling look, and whirled before the eyes of the woman as she saw his round figure starting from the brilliant background, and advancing toward her across the soundless carpets, with a rapid step.

Now the Governor was still looking over the "Herald," as he came down the long hall, and continued to do so until upon the threshold of the reception-room. The woman had, therefore, ample time to observe him before he glanced at her; and, before he did so, she pulled down her veil.

It was an old green barége veil, much worn with the frosty breaths of many winters; it had a little thin rim across her mouth. Her dress of black serge, also, was worn sere. Her cloak, of cheap cloth, was thin, and the nap was gone; her gloves were mended and stained. She had a black Spanish lace tie or scarf, much darned, tied as a tippet about her throat; knit woolen gaiters, tucked into low rubbers, covered her feet and ankles; the gaiters were damp with the snow and slush; for the month was December. One noticed this because her dress was so carefully pinned up over her petticoats that she could not let it down, although in the Governor's house. She seemed to be an old woman and not strong; for she trembled visibly when the Governor entered the room.

His keen official eye took her in at a glance; and its kind, personal expression shot athwart the pupils.

"Your errand, madam?" he began, with his pleasant manner.

"It will — take — a little time," faltered the visitor.

"I can give you ten — no, I will give you fifteen minutes," replied the Governor, taking out his watch. At the sound of her voice he had thrown a piercing look at her veiled face, and now, as he sat down opposite her, he wheeled suddenly, and, rising, called

to his wife, whose white morning-robe he heard trailing through the hall at that moment.

"Mrs. Masscon! My dear, will you have the goodness to order Thomas to bring a cup of coffee? This person here is chilled and wet."

"I need nothing, nothing!" protested the visitor. "I have breakfasted. I am quite strong."

"I will bring it myself," replied Mrs. Masscon unexpectedly. She had never been known to fail to take an important hint from her husband in all their official life.

She took the coffee from Thomas in the simple, natural way in which things were done in that house, and brought it to the woman herself, sweeping in tall, white, and warm, a vision of luxury and happiness. At sight of her the poor woman brought her thin lips together with a little dry sound—an involuntary outcry of misery before a vision of joy.

"Let me help you to untie your veil, madam," said Mrs. Masscon gently. Without waiting for the protest she deftly removed the old green veil; with the instinct of a lady, she took the trouble herself to fold it before she laid it in the lap of the trembling creature.

As the *barége* fell from her pinched face the visitor drew a sharp breath. It had been the folly of her weakness and her misery to defer the inevitable. Now that it had come, she was glad of it.

As the Governor's eyes searched her face his expression underwent a palpable change.

"Madam," he said coldly, "I have seen you here before."

Mrs. Masscon set down the coffee upon a little

mosaic table, and quietly left the room. The old lady looked at the cup, which she did not touch. It was a Dresden cup; the tray was silver; the doyley silk. The rich, strong coffee steamed up with a fine aroma. Her lips twitched with the weakness of a half-fed woman.

"You had better drink it," he said, without warmth of manner. She shook her head.

"I have come back," she gasped. "I have come again."

"It is a pity," said the Governor more softly. "It is useless," he added, chilling again. "It is quite useless. It is a waste of your strength—and of my time."

"I have something to tell you, sir," murmured the old lady. "I thought you would hear me. You are a kind man. I have always told Joseph you were a kind man."

"I am the Governor of the Commonwealth whose laws your son has broken," he said rigidly. "I am responsible to my con—" he hesitated; it occurred to him to wonder if she would understand what "constituents" were—"to the people for the execution of the statutes."

"I suppose so," she answered humbly; "but that does n't help Joseph any."

"The pardoning power," began the Governor, trying to harden himself before this naïve reply, "is not a mere privilege, a luxury of office; it is a sacred responsibility, Mrs. Luke. I must fulfill it to the best of my judgment and my conscience. I must— Do drink that coffee. You look faint, madam."

She looked at the coffee with a spark in her faded eye. It would have choked her! She felt that she could have starved more easily than she could have broken fast in this gorgeous, incomprehensible, unassailable palace, where power to bless her so utterly denied her so inexorably. To her limited feminine view of life the conscience of justice was inconceivable. With how many such pitiable visits as this had she cheated hope and fed despair!

"You are the fourth," she said suddenly. "I've seen every Governor, every one of 'em! I've been and been till they wouldn't let me in. I *had* to go. I *have* to come. Governor Hopkins was the first—but Joseph had only just received his sentence then. Governor Adams said he'd consider the case. But Governor Wise was a Unitarian," she explained, with that simplicity which in such natures as hers passes with themselves for shrewdness. "And we are Orthodox. Joseph's father was the Rev. Haggai Luke, you know. I didn't *expect* much from a Unitarian. Oh, Governor Masscon, Governor Masscon! I expected *everything* from you! You came of pious stock yourself. You were more like us once—in your young days—I thought you would understand the case; I thought *you* would be sorry for Joseph. He has been in prison," she cried shrilly, "for nine years. Just think of that! and he has n't anybody but me in this world. Even his wife has deserted him. Miranda was a frivolous thing. I've *got* to get him out! I've *got* to come here! I've *got* to get him out before I die—I sha'n't live three years more," she added gently. "It's this trouble I have at the heart, I think. I don't mind it very

much except for that; I wanted to see him a free man — only for twenty-four hours before I died. We meant to have a little home together; if it was only two rooms — just for twenty-four hours before I died! You can't think how I pray for that — every morning — every night. Sometimes," she said, stopping short, "I pray till I'm *sick*."

Her hand wandered to her heart, and fell on her lap. Her lips had gone so blue that the governor glanced at her uncomfortably. He rose to ring for his wife, or for a maid; the woman really had a deadly look; but a feeble motion of the old mended gloves restrained him.

"I don't ask much," she pleaded, "only one more hearing — only to remit his sentence by two years. He will be entitled to his one year, anyhow, for good conduct. He is such a good boy now. Perhaps you don't understand, sir, how good a prisoner he is. He is very sorry for what he did," she added simply; "he told me so. Besides, Mr. Governor, Joseph is another man. I have reason to believe that he has met with a change."

She used the old ecclesiastical phrase so solemnly, with such a beautiful reverence of voice and manner, that Governor Masscon did not smile. Perhaps this was because he too, as she said, had been once educated to respect such phrases, and the sacred realities which they represented. Experienced in the darker education of his office, used to every trick and wile invented by crime to play upon executive clemency, he did not think it necessary to jeer at the simple faith of a broken-hearted mother in the penitence of a disgraced son.



His own eyes dimmed.

"I hope so," he said gently. "Such things do happen — sometimes. But you must remember that the law does not take cognizance of a man's private religious experience in — ah — such a condition as your son's. How is his health, madam?"

"He is better," answered Mrs. Luke, in a low tone.

What these three words cost the woman, only the Maker of her honorable conscience could have understood. She would have died on the spot to be able to say that the prisoner was ill; that he was ill enough to justify the mercy of the law, often granted to sick prisoners whose time is nearly served. But, with trembling, broken voice, she told — as she was used — the holy truth.

Perhaps it did her cause no harm, for an expression of appreciation moved over the governor's face.

"There was a plea, I think," he urged, "an effort to free him once, on the ground of sickness?"

"That was in Governor Adams's time," replied the mother wearily. "We thought he was dying. They might have pardoned him, if he had not got better. But he did."

"How did he happen to get better — if he was so ill?" demanded the governor, more sternly.

"Oh," she said, "we sent him the cream."

"*Cream?*"

"Yes, sir. The cream for his cough. It cost fifty cents a day. But I was out nursing then. I earned more than I do sewing. I was stronger. One of Mr. Luke's old parishioners helped me a little, and a third cousin of Joseph's met the expense for two

weeks. We sent the cream for six months. The deputy warden put it in his own ice-chest; he was a kind man. So Joseph got over the cough. I tell you just as it was, Mr. Governor. Joseph suffers a great deal, but he is not dying. I can see that he fails in strength from year to year; but I cannot say that I do not expect *him* to live till his term is up."

"Mrs. Luke!" said the governor impulsively, "I respect you, madam; and I am sorry for you with all my heart."

"Thank you, sir," she said drearily; "but I'd rather you'd be sorry for Joseph. — Will you be so good as to tell me the time, sir? It is visiting day at the prison, you know. I must get the ten o'clock car, sir. I can't possibly miss that. I would n't have disturbed you so early, if it was n't visiting day. I thought — I did n't know — if there was any hope — if I could have told him *anything* to-day! You see how it is. It's more than I can bear to go to my poor boy without one *word* to comfort him." Her voice broke; and the first tear which he had seen on her aged cheeks during the whole interview trickled slowly down a haggard wrinkle. She had a refined, small face, and might have been a pretty woman once. She was a pitiable woman now.

"She is half starved, — half frozen, — heart-broken, — and dying," thought the Governor. His round face contracted painfully. He felt a stricture in his throat. At that moment he would rather have been superintendent in the Whisk Broom Factory than Governor of the grandest State in the Union, with the pardoning power in his hand, and the law behind his back. His was not a pardoning adminis-

tration. There had been too much of that, and the tide was running low the other way just now. Had a man wished to make himself thoroughly unpopular in that Christian State, he could not have selected a surer or swifter means to the end than the pardon of an important felon. A blunder or two in this line had embittered public feeling, and a few atrocious crimes had pushed the subject into politics.

The governor's lips moved, to make the petitioner some merciful answer, the best paltry comfort that he could invent ; some kindly, cruel, idle words.

But at that moment, a commotion in the hall startled and diverted him.

The bell rang violently. A fine young fellow bounded in ; his setter and luggage tumbled after him ; the wet dog tramped familiarly, unrebuked, over the Axminster carpet. There were cries of welcome, and the sound of warm kisses, and boisterous, boyish words, and melting, motherly tenderness — and a little whirl of delight and love stormed through the governor's palace.

"Excuse me, madam," said the governor, with a flush of vivid joy, "my son has just returned from college."

In the confusion, everybody forgot the old lady, and she melted away, afterward no one recalled exactly how. She went down the long freestone steps slowly. Her hand clung to the railing for support.

She tried to gather her dress from her wet gaiters, but she could not grasp it. She crawled down, and stood for a moment in the slush, looking about her uncertainly. Her aged face was drawn tightly, like a mask, rigid and gray. Her breath came short. She

put her hand to her heart, and tried to steady herself. The white snow had turned blue-black before her whirling eyes. She crept on a little way, and, groping for a lamp-post, held to it.

“Mr. Harold,” whispered the inestimable Thomas, beckoning mysteriously to the collegian, at the breakfast-room door, “I’d be obliged if you was to break it to your father and mother that the person who’s ben a-callin’ on the Governor has just dropped dead in front of the house.”

When she came to her life, she stared about her stupidly. She lay on a wonderful bed, in an incredible room. Luxuries of whose mere existence she had never conceived blurred before her eyes — the simple conditions of daily existence to these fortunate, kind-hearted people. Mrs. Masscon herself sat beside the poor woman, with a sympathetic finger-tip upon her pulse. The voice of the Governor’s own distinguished physician was heard in the hall.

“Ah,” murmured the old lady, raising herself weakly, “you did not send me to the hospital? I did not know you were people like that.” She sank back upon the lace-trimmed pillows.

“I don’t see but you are just like folks, after all,” she added. Suddenly, full remembrance came. She sprang, gasping, to her feet.

“*What time is it?*” she cried sharply. “What o’clock is it? — *Half-past ten?* Oh, I’ve lost my train, my only train! There is n’t any other goes to the prison. Visiting hours will be over. We ain’t allowed to go but once in two months. At first, it

was only once in three. I've been lyin' here with that heart attack a whole hour, and I've lost my train to the prison. Oh, madam, have mercy on me and tell me how to bear it! If it was your son, madam — that fine young fellow — and I've never failed him once, not once before, in all these years. Rain or shine, or sick or well, I've got there *somehow*. What will he think? What will he do? And I can't write even to tell him, even to *explain* it till next week. We can't even write to 'em only once a week, and that's only lately. It seems as if I were out of my senses. Madam, be patient with me," said the old lady, with sudden self-possession. "I beg your pardon. I have been very troublesome to you. I thank you, and I will go now; I must not burden you any longer. You couldn't help it; you have been kind to me. Nobody is to blame; it is the will of God. By and by I shall bear it better."

She staggered, and walked across the room, feeling for the door like a person gone blind. On the threshold she turned and, with a trustful, feminine instinct, asked that other woman to help arrange her disordered dress. Was not her bonnet crooked, and crushed by the fall? Her veil was muddy, she thought. Did she look decent now? Was she tidy? Should she straighten it — so?

"I wouldn't like to go out there looking *unladylike*," she said gently. "I shall go out and see the outside of the prison. I can get so near as that. He might be at work near one of the windows, and see me, you know. I wouldn't want to go looking shabby. *I would n't want to disgrace my son!*"

"Stay," said the Governor's wife, with broken

voice. "Wait one moment. *I* will see that you reach the prison — before visiting hours are over."

The Governor's horses, splashing through the slush and mud, made a fine record that December day, in spite of the Governor's coachman, who disapproved of his orders, and obeyed them under protest. It was a good ten-mile pull; but in fifty-seven minutes the coach drew up in sight of the State Prison, a lonely building, rising, sullen and dark, a fortress on the pacific, suburban horizon which was supposed to render escape difficult and identification easy.

The old minister's widow sat within the satincushioned, sachet-scented coach, a bewildered, solitary passenger. She looked out at the gravel-pits and rows of birches broken by the last ice storm. She held her wet skirts around her shaking limbs that they might not touch the plush and broadcloth robe. She did not lean back against the malachite-colored satin covering, "lest she should hurt it." She looked out of the carriage windows with blurring eyes. Her lips moved. She said: "God bless her."

Upon that journey in that carriage she fell into political reflection, — the first in her simple life: —

"This is a great country. Folks ought to know it. Governors are people. If folks understood how it is they wouldn't complain of their betters. I must explain how it is. It is a great country."

"But, my *dear!*" gasped the Governor. "The official coach seen at the prison — under such cir-



cumstances ! The episode is unprecedented. If you had consulted me — I don't know what my con- " —

"Your constituents have never yet elected *me* !" said Mrs. Masscon, with her charming decision of manner. "I don't see that it is their business where I send my own carriage — for it was n't the Governor's coach. I had no intention of consulting you, my love. All I intended was to get that old lady out to see her son in season. Your constituents" —

"Confound my constituents !" said the Governor unexpectedly.

His wife smiled peacefully. She did not tell him that she had offered the coachman three dollars to make the trip on time.

It was beginning to rain, and the morning was well worn away. It had been a gray day at the start. Now, on the wings of the storm, twilight had swept into the prison before midday.

Joseph Luke, Convict Number 223, recently promoted to be superintendent of the picture-frame workshop, cast nervous glances at the high windows between whose black bars a glimpse of the soaking road and dreary horizon, of gravel-pits and broken birch-trees, could be gained if one knew just where to stand and precisely how to look for it.

The other prisoners glanced at Luke with that low delight in the disappointment of a man whom they had found themselves usually occupied in envying which is characteristic of their kind and of their lot. The red-headed convict (whose very name was Damm), who was up for the most abominable crime on the statute-book, and who had been

docketed as Luke's messmate for a month past, made audible comments which sent the color hotly to Luke's sunken face. But the mild little prisoner with the frightened eyes, sentenced to life for murdering his mother-in-law with a carpet-sweeper when he was drunk, comforted the overseer, in his fashion, as well as he could : —

"She hain't never missed comin', not once. *She* would n't go back on you. Must be something happened to her."

"Yes, yes, Lamb," said Joseph Luke, with an entreating gesture; he could not talk; he was more overcome than he could bear to show in the workshop. It had never occurred to him that his mother could miss a visiting day. Nobody else came to see him. In all the free and reputable world she who bore him was his only friend; he had counted upon her as children when they are hurt do upon their mother's kisses.

He was a man still in the prime of life; he had been sentenced at thirty. He had the chest of a consumptive, but the muscle of a person quite able, under suitable conditions, to overcome his diathesis. As a free man, with a clear conscience, he would have lived a comfortable, equable, not too sensitive life, and have drawn in a considerable share of human happiness. I was going to say "swooped in," for the expression somehow came naturally with a first glance at the man. At the second a gentler phrase would succeed. He was greatly broken.

He had been an educated man; and the prison had done its work accordingly. He had been a rich man, but that proved to be, rather to his surprise, a

secondary fact in the sequence. It gave him some relief to remember that he had once honestly acquired the luxuries which he fell to retain; but the mere surfaces of a life of ease had gone to ashes more readily in this nine years' hell than the instructed intelligence. It had been easier to see the impulses of what he used to call social position crunched between the iron teeth of his grated window than to crush the instincts of cultivated thought. It took him some time to discover this; but when he had found it out he said to himself: "Herein lies my real incarceration." He was a greedy reader, passionately feeding upon everything that he could get hold of in the name of a book. In nine years he had read enough in that cell to have made a scholar of him, had he had the scholar's nature or a freeman's opportunity. As he read, in his fashion he thought. This was itself a new experience. He had been one of those comfortable men who prance through life with apparent aims, but little real reflection. He had gone waltzing from his father's country parsonage to the first university in the country, thence to the first great railroad in the section; had married the Treasurer's daughter, won the confidence of the corporation (he was a handsome, lovable fellow), become Assistant Treasurer, "boomed" the Road, played with it, almost ruined it, and bowed to its sentence. For the Road condemned him. When his embezzlement was discovered, he had offered all his private property, including the house which he held in his own name, and pleaded "For God's sake and his mother's," to be allowed to work out restitution in si-

lence, and without penal disgrace. He had asked nothing in his own name, nor in that of his wife, who, upon the day when the facts were made known to her, had returned to her father's house. But the defalcation was enormous; it was publicly reported at nearly half a million, and probably reached at least half the size of the report; and the Road, a raging victim of the cleverest brain that had ever handled its books, called upon the law by all the furies to avenge it. At a suggestion of clemency, the President was said to have sworn the wittiest and wickedest oath of his life, which became the after-dinner *bon mot* of the directors for many a grim day. Feeling ran to a wild height. For fifteen years no man had added to the annals of crime, in that State, a case more hopeless of public mercy or more destitute of private sympathy. Even a "pardoning Governor" might scarcely have dared so much as to cast his gentle eye in Joseph Luke's direction.

"Never mind, dear, I'll make it all up to you," his mother had said once, in one of those heart-throbs, we might say heart-throes of feminine tenderness which the finest man in the world does not know how to treat. Joseph Luke was not that man, and he had answered wearily, closing his eyes, and leaning his head back against the prison wall. The old lady felt indefinably hurt; but she did not tell him so. She only went away a little earlier than usual, not staying quite to the limit of her time.

In those first years it is to be feared that he had often been impatient with her. Men will, with the women they love above all earthly things. She

always excused him. She said: "Poor fellow; he gets so nervous in there. Who can wonder?" She never resented any of the moods which imprisonment wrought upon the wretched man; they were not always easy to bear.

She counted it her great mercy that for a year or two past she had found him more equable, quite gentle, and thoughtful of her. He had grown to lean greatly upon her, with a childish dependence that was pathetic to see; he hungered and thirsted for her; he met her affectionately; he lavished loving words upon her, and little signs and touches—the things that women will die for; or live for, which is saying vastly more. He had begun to recognize her supreme devotion, and to repay it with the poor coin of his broken nature.

When the old lady said that he had "met with a change," the phrase had a perfectly definite meaning to her; and if, in all religious phraseology, it meant half as much, what she called "the world" would begin to respect it.

It lacked fifteen minutes of the close of visiting hours, and the prison had quite given the old lady up. Luke himself had abandoned all hope of seeing her an hour ago. She had always been the first visitor to stand waiting before the opening bars, and hers the last, longing face which they shut out. The convict overseer bowed his head over the clumsy work of a new inmate (a whistling burglar), thus hiding his blanched cheeks a little from the curiosity of the prisoners and guards; he trembled in every nerve; he felt sick enough to fall to the stone floor like a fainting woman. The gilding brush in his

hand shook and spattered the coarse walnut moulding in the wrong place; he laid the frame down.

"I — can't teach you, to-day, Picket, I am not — I have not been" —

At this moment the chaplain touched him on the shoulder. The chaplain was fond of Joseph Luke, in whom he believed himself to have found a pet convert, at all events a sincere and sorry man; and the chaplain had been in office seventeen years; he had grown shrewd as well as holy in that barren field where the sacred grain sprouted so slowly; it was not easy to dupe him. The chaplain said gently:—

"Come. She is here — after all. She looks pretty tired. I would meet her quietly if I were you."

The day being so dark and wet, and the hour so late, visitors were fewer than usual; the last one had left the visitors' room. This was a school-boy who came to see his father. The old man had forged a check to pay a surgeon's bill for an accident to the lad at foot-ball. His son was ashamed of him, but he came sometimes, asked a few proper questions, and went coldly away.

The old prisoner was passing through the door as Luke entered it; he was wiping his eyes. Joseph put out his hand, unnoticed, and stroked the old man on the sleeve. Once he would not have thought to do that.

So it came about that the son and the mother were alone in the visitors' room. This was a rare and precious circumstance.

He remembered what the chaplain had said, and



tried not to agitate her; but his panting breath came as weakly, almost, as her own. She stood swaying before him, white, transparent, and smiling. Almost any other woman would have fallen or sobbed; but she never cried at the prison,—she waited till she got away. She called that “keeping up,” for “his sake.” He put his arm about her tenderly and got her to a bench, and sat down beside her. In nine years he had never seen her look like this. A spasm of agonized divination crossed his face. He understood perfectly that she had been dangerously ill, but he knew that she did not mean to tell him so.

“I was — delayed. I — could n’t help it, dear,” she breathed. “It was nothing — a little matter — I could not come.”

“Yes, Mother; I see — I understand. It is all right.”

“I would have come sooner if I *could*, Joseph. You know I would, don’t you? You know it was a little accident — something I could n’t help.”

“Yes, Mother, I know. Dear Mother! *Dear* Mother!”

Her lip trembled at the tremulousness and tenderness of his voice.

“I thought I could n’t get here,” she gasped. “I lost the train! I lost the train for the first time in all these years.”

“Such things will happen; but it’s all right now. There, there, dear!” He comforted her, and patted the old Spanish lace scarf.

“Yes, I’ve got here now. I won’t *let* anything happen another time, Joseph, to make me late.”

“Of course you won’t. I’m sure of it. God

bless you, Mother! You've never missed once. You are all I have. You keep me alive. Body and soul you keep me alive in this awful place."

"Thank you, dear." She gave him a pathetic smile. "You're a good boy, Joseph. You comfort me. You are my only son, and you are a great comfort to me."

Thus they beguiled each other with the divine deceit of love. If neither was deceived, neither said so, and the tender hypocrisy soothed them both.

"You don't ask how I got here," urged the old lady, rousing herself suddenly. She began to laugh, and to make merriment of her sad eyes. This she called "cheering him up."

"Guess!" she cried, pulling off her mended glove nervously; she had taken off her veil and the darned lace scarf; her bonnet seemed more awry than usual, and her hair was blown about her wrinkled forehead; she was a very neat old lady, and she kept pulling at things and pushing things away to straighten them.

"I came in the Governor's carriage!" She revealed this startling fact with a pretty, feminine motion of the head that might have made her charming when she was young.

"Oh — you've seen the Governor again, then." The prisoner's face became suffused, and then turned gray. To the incident of the carriage he seemed quite oblivious. It was the least trifle in the tremendous fact. If the executive clemency had been tested again and had been again denied him —

"You shouldn't have gone, Mother!" he said sharply. It was his only hard word to her that day.

Anguish wrung it from him ; let us forgive him — as she did.

“Women cannot understand these things,” he said, trembling. “You may make a fatal blunder. You ought to let the case alone.”

“But it was *her* carriage!” protested the old lady. “She sent me out in it herself. She is just like any other Christian, bless her! She said she’d get me here before visiting hours were over.”

“They are over now,” said Luke, recovering himself, and speaking with dreary gentleness. “There comes the guard to say so. Our time is short to-day, mother. Forgive me, Mother. Never mind the carriage. I didn’t mean that. It’s all right. Kiss me good-by. — There. Once more. — There, there, Mother dear! See! Don’t grieve, little Mother. Write me all about it. All I ask is, don’t, *don’t* go to the Governor again without my knowledge. You don’t understand how these things have to be managed. My lawyer will know best. Don’t make these feminine emotional moves. They may work incalculable harm. I’ll write to Gibson, myself — go and see Gibson. Don’t act on your own hook — don’t! What did the Governor say? — No. Don’t tell me. I see. I understand. There is no hope; not a ray of it, from Masscon. You must see that. You *must* accept that fact, and be guided by the judgment of men who understand the world, and politics — and the public currents that eddy about the subject of crime. Women can’t be expected to comprehend these matters. Therefore they should let them alone.”

While he spoke, with great self-restraint but with

the passionate, intelligent masculine emphasis that had always controlled her since he was a little fellow and she had let him have his "way," her aged face fell heavily. She looked more puzzled than hurt; but a certain feminine obstinacy, settling gently upon her eyes and mouth, replied to him. He noticed this, and smiled sadly. If she had ruined his cause he would not undeceive her. He patted her cheek, and gently supported her to the door.

"My chances are up," he said to himself. "They are all up. I get no pardon from this Administration."

He did not ask her what the Governor said, but bade her good-by lovingly and silently; and she went out.

As she passed the threshold he called her back. The indulgent guard winked pleasantly, and delayed to let her come.

Luke was a favorite in the jail — a good prisoner, obeying with the fidelity and the docility of intelligence. He gained an extra moment without difficulty, and, restraining his mother for the space of it, whispered something in her ear.

"No," she said, "no. I have not seen her. Only that once I told you of — in her carriage — going to a concert of a sunny afternoon."

She put her lips together stiffly, and said no more. It was a long time since he had inquired about his wife. Mrs. Luke hoped he had forgotten her. She could not help it; she always felt unhappy when he talked of Miranda; a little blonde woman, who rouged, and left her husband because he was in trouble — a petty creature, sobbing in ex-

pensive dresses over *her* wrongs and *her* miseries while Joseph was in jail.

For nine years the wife had kept her long, unwifelike silence. She had never broken it by a visit, by a letter, by a message. Not a thought had come from her to the unhappy man whose name she bore. Not a sign had told him so much as that he was forgiven. The dumbness of scorn, the deafness of death, she had set between them utterly; he had not sought to break it; and what he thought of it, or what it meant to him, even his mother did not know, and dared not ask.

She thought of that other woman with a hot heart. It gave her a kind of jealousy that he should speak of Miranda — a doll; a creature who could desert him. She went heavily down the prison steps; she held her skirts up from her old gaiters, but they were soaked through. She had half a mile to walk to the station, and it was now raining violently. She put up her faded umbrella weakly, tied on her veil, and bowed her head to the storm. One of her gaiters slipped down, for they did not fit very well, and she leaned against a broken birch-tree to pull it up. The prisoners were just going into their dinner, rank in file, two by two.

"Hi!" said he who was called Damm, "—— me if that ain't the old lady, yonder!"

Luke glanced over the red head of the ruffian prisoner through the long bars. He could just see her clutching at her dripping skirts, and trying to hold the umbrella (it looked like the very one his father used to carry to prayer-meetings) which the storm had twisted inside out. She passed the

birches, crossed the gravel-pits, and then the abominable prisoner pushed him along the corridor.

It was April, and a blast that would have done credit to February thrust the eminent gentlemen up the steps of the State House viciously, as if it had a grudge against them, or against the object of the hearing. For the hearing was a foregone conclusion now. In her quiet, obstinate way, the old lady made up her mind on that. All the winter, while she crouched over her sewing-machine, in the chilly hall bed-room of her poor boarding-house, or crawled to and fro across the ice from grand houses where she made and mended carpets — she had resolved her purpose firmly, fearlessly, and secretly. For once in her life she had concluded that she knew better than Joseph. The petition should go in. Gibson, his lawyer, should take it in. That parishioner of Mr. Luke's who was kind to her should head it. The third cousin should sign it. There should be another hearing. She was quite reserved with her son, on this point, evading his questions, diverting his anxiety, and feigning inaction and despair.

"Don't expect a pardon, dear," she had said, "and you will bear it better. It is only three years more."

She thought herself diplomatic in the extreme. Whatever the prisoner thought, he had dropped the subject. With it, so nearly as could be learned, he had dropped the restlessness of hope. He grew very quiet, dull, and pale. His eye wandered. He spoke little; he missed writing to her once or twice; he grew averse to reading; he sat for hours, with his head sunk upon his breast.



The April gale "took it out" on the poor old lady — she blew up the steps so much more easily than the unpetticoated and solid politicians who preceded her, puffing, to the Blue Room, which the wisest State in the Union sets apart in her State House for tragedies like these. Mrs. Luke shrank in, late and breathless. In fact she looked so, when she came to the top of the second flight of stairs, that the old parishioner gave her a scared glance, and got her into an ante-chamber behind a screen.

"She is in no condition to be present at the hearing," he managed to send word to the Governor. "What is to be done with her? She's liable to die on the spot. How shall we get rid of her?"

"Tell her," said the Governor, wrinkling his round, kind face, "that Governor Masseon thinks she will do most service to her case by remaining where she is until he calls for her."

At the mention of the gubernatorial name the old lady nodded happily. She made no objection or resistance to his wishes; obeying humbly, and with a childlike trustfulness which was pathetic to see. She sat down alone in the ante-room. The third cousin's wife would have accompanied her, but an urgent engagement on a church committee unfortunately interfered. The doors into the Blue Room were open. The screen concealed her; and the hearing, to the great relief of the Governor's Council, the lawyer, and the old parishioner, opened without her.

It opened promptly, and it proceeded briskly. The Governor's Council had their minds definitely formed on the case, and intended to make short work of it. They listened to the petition deferentially, and dis-

posed of it summarily ; they were bored, not to say annoyed, by its repetition at this time.

"I suppose," observed the Chairman of the Pardon Committee, "that this particular hearing is a matter of form, and the sooner over the better. It is an old case, quite familiar to this and other Councils, and we see no reason to change the results of former discussions. It strikes me as a work of time to go over the ground."

"Allow me, sir" — began the prisoner's lawyer.

"And I would suggest" — urged the old parishioner.

The usual hopeless arguments followed in the usual hopeless manner. The Council listened and drummed on the table. The Chairman of the Pardon Committee drew plans for his seaside villa on a page of his note-book. The lawyer stammered, the third cousin looked at his watch, and the old parishioner shook his head. From that Anti-pardon Administration it was clear that the most eminent embezzler the State had sentenced for thirteen years could look for no executive mercy. The pitiful farce proceeded as was to be expected, and was rapidly approaching its conventional end, when the Governor unexpectedly arose and walked two or three times nervously across the room.

"Gentlemen" — he began suddenly. Then came the bomb-shell. In his impetuous, incisive voice he hurled out a few words — six only, but they started the Blue Room to its feet.

"Impossible !"

"Unprecedented !"

"Most indiscreet."

"Beyond the sympathy of the Council."

"But, Governor, you do not consider" —

"I have considered," said the Governor firmly; "and I mean the thing I say."

He shut his lips together in a way which his Council recognized. He was the easiest, jolliest, best-natured man in the world, *bon camarade* to every member of his staff, and hail-fellow-well-met with his Council, who expected to control him three quarters of the time. On the fourth occasion they might as well have tried to manage a pyramid. This proved to be the fourth.

When the Council looked him in the eye, they perceived that their *camarade* had vanished from the Blue Room. The official glance replied to them. It was as keen as a sword-thrust, and as cool. It was the Governor of the Commonwealth who listened to his Council (they protested for some time) politely, with gentlemanly interest, deferentially, as one with a high regard for their opinions — but unmoved.

The Chairman took him one side, and got him before a window. The two men looked down on the dreary, driving, striving streets for a moment in significant silence. The gale was blowing the citizens along like leaves. It was Holy Week, and the streets were unusually full. Seen at that height, in the dust and struggle, humanity seemed a sad thing.

"There is misery enough in the world," thought the Governor. The power to give joy occurred to him at that moment as something God-like. It ran through his veins like rapture.

"I only wished to remind you," observed the Chairman, in a low, strenuous voice. "Of course,

your Council are amenable to your judgment and wishes — but I think it my duty to remind you that you are elected by an Anti-pardon party. I must recall to your Excellency's remembrance the prospects of a reelection. It might be a pity to lose it — for one felon. Permit me to remind you of your second term. Allow me to observe that your constituents ” —

The Governor's face flushed. He turned sharply from the window, and paced the room again, for some moments. No one addressed him. The Chairman stroked his beard, and smiled indulgently. The Council talked of bi-metalism, with well-executed indifference. The lawyer and the old parishioner huddled together, consulting in disheartened whispers.

A divine drama was going on in the Blue Room; but this commonplace scene gave no signs of it; perhaps these commonplace spectators had no consciousness of it.

A slight, almost inaudible sound stirred from the ante-room, and stopped; it was like the nibble of some helpless creature against a wall of stone.

The Governor heard it, and strode over the corridor. He stood before the screen a moment before he touched it. Then he swung it gently.

The old lady did not stir. She had crawled to the bare floor, and there she knelt. Her face was in her hands, her hands upon the wooden chair. Her lips moved. No sound came from them. She was praying. From earth and earthly mercy, she had abandoned hope. But God was left.

The Governor put his finger on his lips, and beckoned to his Council. Every man rose to his feet, and looked at her.

The Governor replaced the screen reverently, and shut the door. He put his hand upon the Chairman's shoulder and distinctly said :—

“—— my constituents !”

On the wings of the wind the lawyer called a hackney coach. He and the old parishioner got into the carriage with her. The third cousin congratulated her, and ran for his horse-car to meet his wife at the Good Friday vespers. The two men who did not run were very nervous ; they were afraid she would die on their hands. The old parishioner, with unprecedented personal emphasis, remarked :—

“*My* wife would have been present on this occasion if she had n't been in her grave for nineteen years !”

It seemed unfortunate that there should be no other woman with the convict's mother just then ; but she took it very sweetly and uncomplainingly, as she did most things which befell her.

She had not spoken a word. Her pallor was alarming, but still she seemed to possess a certain marvelous strength. Her breath came in sickening gasps, but her hands held firmly to the carriage strap. Rapture of the soul and agony of the flesh fought together upon her aged face ; but the look of her eyes was as those may look who have reached the world of utter blessedness. These unimaginative men regarded her silently, and felt puzzled. The old parishioner passed his hand across his forehead. Once he begged her to “keep up, for Reverend Mr. Luke's sake, madam, your poor son's deceased father.”

When they reached the prison it was thought best for her to see him quite alone. The chaplain bustled about eagerly. The warden, a humane man, gave every possible order for the comfort of the old lady in this trying scene.

Rumors buzzed through the prison like wasps. In ten minutes four hundred and thirteen inmates knew the facts. The abominable prisoner related them viciously to the mild murderer, who spilled the gilding when he heard them. The old forger wept when they reached his deafened ears. But Picket, the burglar, whistled "Old Folks at Home."

Guards redoubled their attentions to the prisoners. Any excitement, sad or glad, was dangerous within those dire walls. The chaplain was pale with the occasion. Every officer's eye was upon Number 223 when he passed along the corridor, well-guarded, to his cell.

He had been summoned there from the workshop, on some pretext, and went listlessly enough. He walked feebly. He had changed much that winter. The prison physician had expressed anxiety about him. He coughed, and his eye was vagrant and subtle. His hands hung at his side.

They led him into his cell; and there he found the chaplain, who addressed him with evident emotion.

"Mr. Luke," he said. The convict stirred slightly at the prefix, but looked dully at the chaplain — "Mr. Luke, you have not been very well of late, and the authorities have allowed your mother to come and see you."

"It is not visitors' day," said the prisoner apathetically.



"But she is here," urged the chaplain; his voice trembled. "She is to come and see you for a little while."

Joseph Luke rose, with the mechanical instinct of long captivity, to obey. He said:—

"Where is the guard? They will not let me go to the visitors' room without a guard."

The chaplain's eye filled. "You are to receive your mother here," he said. "It is a special arrangement."

When he turned she was standing behind him; she was perfectly self-possessed. She said: "Good-afternoon, Joseph. I've come to see you a few minutes, my dear."

The chaplain bowed and passed her. He went nervously to the visitors' room and found the lawyer and the old parishioner, and sat down beside them, and took off his spectacles, and said they needed a new lens, and put them on again, and then covered them with his hands.

"Well, Joseph," she said, "are n't you glad to see me?"

"They have forgotten the guard!" he muttered.

"I came out with Mr. Gibson and your father's old deacon, Joseph. We came to make a little call on you. They wanted to consult you about a petition."

"Mother," he said half complainingly, "we are not watched. There is no officer here. I don't understand it."

She went straight up to him then, and put her trembling, thin old arms about his neck.

"Oh, Joseph! Try to bear it!" she said. He scarcely changed color at her broken words, but bowed his head upon his breast.

"I can bear it, mother. Don't spare me. I am quite prepared. I knew the petition would fail. I don't blame you any, mother. We must make the best of it. It was to be expected."

Then she cried out tumultuously — word over word — gasp after gasp — sob upon sob: —

"Bear it, Joseph — *bear* it! There is no guard. Nobody watches us. Nobody ever will, any more. The petition did n't fail. Your old mother was n't so silly as you thought her. Try to bear it, Joseph — try to *bear it to be free!*"

The railroad station was throbbing full, for it was Saturday afternoon. It was full to over-brimming, for it was the busiest, hopefulest Saturday in the calendar.

It had been the pleasant fancy of the governor to bestow all that joy upon Good Friday, and his advisers did not gainsay him. Wait till Thanksgiving, and who could say where that deathly faced old woman would be? Thus it happened that the official pardon had been formally extended to the prisoner upon the solemn day when He who pitied and considered prisoners, and forgot sin, and remembered repentance, is cherished in the hearts and minds of all the world.

Joseph Luke had chosen to remain in his cell till dawn of the next day. On the breaking of the morning, before the prisoners were astir, the chaplain had got him quietly away, and had himself accompanied

the pardoned convict into the city, where she awaited them, trembling, sitting on her packed trunk in the cold hall bedroom. The chaplain had remained by them, meeting every responsibility through the agitations of the day. He did this with the happy enthusiasm of those plain, unselfish men, who fill hard places such as his, receiving no glory, and little recognition outside of them. He had just left the two together, having blessed them, and received their blessing, and so, bidding them Godspeed, he had gone his ways.

The two sat straight on the station bench, side by side, with clasped hands.

It was an hour yet before the train left.

"We'd better be sure and be in *time*," the old lady had said. He seemed to share her nervousness; he was panting to be off and away, out of the old air, far from the old faces, where no eye but hers should look in his with the consciousness that he felt would kill him. He had not understood that to be free is the least of freedom. To be held worthy of freedom — was that the thing? His sick soul petulantly craved the impossible: the trust, the respect, the confidence, the affection of honorable men.

Without a friend, without a dollar, without a footing in the life of the world, without a home, without so much as a shelter, without an occupation or the prospect of any, without reference to a past, or hope for a future, how were these two weaklings of error and fate to use the dark and doubtful privilege of a convict's pardon? They had run out into it, like children playing on an iron track before the advancing train that thunders behind them in the dusk. Like children, they had been taken up and carried.

That Christian woman, the Lady of the State, who was "just like folks," had made herself the goddess of the emergency in the quiet, almost unrecognized way in which she was accustomed to do such things. The Governor, who was used to shut his official eyes to his wife's private charities, smiled, and asked no questions for policy's sake, but ordered his horses and went off for a ride with his boy, and said they would trot out to the Whisk Broom Factory, and whistled all the way. Once he was heard to say:—

"Confound a second term!"

The Governor's wife and the prison chaplain had arranged it all between them, Heaven knows how, in a snatch of time like that. But both were accustomed to the conquest of exigencies; and she was a general at the management of helpless people. Since she had that old grocery store in the obscure mountain village in the remote end of the State, where she went sometimes in the summer, to be unfashionable and happy; and since the store was closed for lack of a man of "gumption" to make it go, and sure of the "go," if it had the gumption; and since she was willing to trust the little business to an ex-convict—was that anybody's affair, she should like to ask?

"God Almighty's, possibly, madam," the chaplain had said, winking very fast. "You may find that grocery store down on *His* real estate list, some day."

The chaplain was so accustomed to give spiritual advice that it flowed along naively upon the great lady, who received it, smiling indulgently, and proceeded to ask: And since over the grocery store

there was a little tenement, five rooms or so, decent, and could be made quite comfortable, and were furnished after a fashion by the last occupant; and since a telegram could warm them up and put a few things in the larder for the two poor travelers; and since they could get them to supper on Holy Saturday, and spend their Easter there, at home, together — was there any reason, Mrs. Masscon demanded, in her ringing voice (it was the voice of the Governor's wife, used to having matters as she chose them to be) — was there any *reason* why Mr. and Mrs. Luke should not at once occupy this position and this home? Having said this, she found no more to say, but bade Hans drive home, sent for the cook, and ordered to-morrow's breakfast: of kidgerree.

Thus it was that the travelers sat in the station, alone, an hour before train time, white and trembling, frightened at joy, awed before the mercy for which they had been entreating Heaven for nine wretched years. No person whom they knew had spoken with them, unless we except the Governor's Thomas, who deposited a roast of beef and a basket of fruit and a package of new books at the old lady's feet, and disappeared, sniffing considerably, without any social overtures.

Joseph Luke had not spoken for some time; his hands were shut tightly into each other; his free-man's clothes sat awkwardly on him after so long an estrangement; he glanced furtively at the cut of other men's hair; he winced a little when the station police passed through the waiting-room to help himself to a cup of water. His mother did not chatter nor try to interrupt his reserve. Perhaps her own

soul was too solemn; perhaps her body was too weak. A bright color burned on her wrinkled cheeks. Her eyes looked large, and seemed to see to a long distance. She opened her old valise and packed away her gaiters; it strengthened her to do some unimportant thing. When she raised her head, having shut and clasped the valise, the seat beside her was empty.

With a shiver of horror she sprang to her feet. Joseph was gone. He was not to be seen. Afraid to call him, afraid to cry out or seek help, she tottered out into the middle of the room and stood staring.

Then she turned slowly, and crawled back to her seat.

At the window of the ticket-office a lady, in fresh and expensive mourning, stood, taking ten cents for a rebate from some suburban passage bought upon the cars. They are usually people of ease who look most carefully after their dimes, and the little woman plainly led a comfortable life. As she closed her wallet and tossed back the heavy crape veil, which fell almost to the hem of her long cloak, she turned her soft face.

Joseph Luke stood directly before her. It was his wife.

The blonde gasped for breath, and walked a step or two and passed him. She seemed to hesitate. The real color ran beneath her rouge. The ex-convict, haggard, with cropped hair and awkward shuffle, followed her silently. As the lady advanced, the man pursued. The contrast between the two was so evident and so pitiful that the audacity of his act could



not escape notice. People in the waiting-room began to raise their eyes. The station policeman might have been observed not to seem to observe the scene. The freed prisoner trod firmly. The doll began to tremble; she hurried, and her high French heels made little clicks on the bare floor. He followed her doggedly. She did not repulse him. He followed her into the ante-room that led to the exit, and the door swung to.

The old lady sat alone by the big valise. She did not look at the ante-room door. She did not dare to. For her life — and the long, irregular throbs of her heart told her that life and death were wrestling in her weak body — she would not have intruded on those two, nor so much as said, “Joseph, have you forgotten your old mother?”

Miranda was his wife. There had been no divorce. God had joined them; whom sin and weakness had put asunder.

“Miranda is the kind of woman who has to *see* a man,” she thought. “He could do anything with her once. He might again.”

Old Mrs. Luke sat quite still. She stared straight before her. Whether moments or hours passed she did not know. She dared not look at the station clock. It occurred to her that they might lose the train, but she could not remind him. Who knew? Perhaps he meant to lose the train.

He was a man now; no prisoner any longer, to be dependent on the coddling of an old mother. He could do as he pleased.

The station policeman sauntered in, and made an errand in the ante-room, and strolled back. The

colored man came in and announced two or three trains ; then at last their own ; the train that led to the little store and the tenement — to home, to hope, to rest, to peace.

The ante-room door swung, and an Irish woman with five children bounced in. She was followed by an old gentleman crawling through on crutches. The door slammed back.

Mrs. Luke's brain spun ; her ears rung ; the room grew black.

" Well, mother ? "

Suddenly his voice smote her, and she saw him. In her confused condition his appearance took on the nature of the miraculous. It had not occurred to her that there was any other door.

He sat down beside her, and began to take up the valise. He did not seem as agitated as she expected. His eye had a strange, strong look, and his mouth shut decidedly ; his weak expression seemed to have been unlocked from his face like a fetter.

" Well, mother ? " he repeated quietly.

" What did Miranda say, Joseph ? "

She leaned her head back against the high dado of the station wall, and closed her eyes.

" Oh, not much."

" What is she in all that black for ? She wore blue velvet the last time I saw her."

" Her father is dead."

" Oh ! I never heard that. Did you know it before ? "

" Certainly. It was in the papers two months ago."

" You never mentioned it to me, Joseph."

"No."

"What else did Miranda say?"

"Not much of anything. She would have come back to me, I think, if I had asked her."

"Did you ask her?"

"It is time to take our train, now, mother. Give me that valise."

"I did n't know but what you'd — given up going, Joseph?"

"Give me your tickets. There. Take my arm, mother. Come along. Come this way. Lean on me."

"But what did you *say* to Miranda?" panted the old lady, trotting along, trying to keep pace with him.

"Why, not much. I told her my mother had stood by me like God Almighty, and all Hell should n't part us now. That's all."

But when they had got into the cars, the old lady gave him a furtive look.

"He will go back to her," she thought. "He loves Miranda — after all. He will go back to her when I am gone."

Easter broke brilliantly. In that remote village, the late, reluctant spring yielded suddenly and tenderly upon the sacred morning, and all the wide country, delicate of color, pure of breath, opened before the faded eyes that saw it and blessed God.

She seemed utterly, incredibly, divinely happy. He watched her anxiously, for the transparency of her countenance alarmed him. But she said:—

"I am quite well, my son." Then in a few moments: "What can I do for you, my dear?"

“Joseph — are you comfortable ? ”

“My son, did you rest well ? Did I make the bed to suit you ? Were you warm ? And happy ? Dear, was the coffee to your taste ? ”

“Joseph, are you resting ? Are you sure you’re happy ? This is a very comfortable home, I think. We can make ourselves quite happy here. It only needs a little fixing, and to care for it and pet it. Homes need petting, Joseph, just like people.”

“Thank you, dear. I’m much obliged to you for kissing me. You are a good son ; you are a comfort to me, Joseph. I am glad I did not die. I am very happy. It is Easter Sunday. I should like to go to church, I think ; I am so happy. Would you mind, my son ? ”

He could not bring himself to disappoint her ; and he accompanied her, shrinking and abashed, to the village service, and heard the resurrection hymns, and breathed the Easter flowers, and was not sorry he had gone ; and came home gently and passed the day beside her. They talked of all their little plans and hopes and dreams ; of freedom, of peace, and honor, and the respect of neighbors, and honest labor, and years of calm content. She was feverish and excited, but celestially happy.

They parted early that night, for he saw how she needed sleep ; and she kissed him and blessed him, and he knelt before her, and put his face upon her lap as he used to do when he was a little boy.

“Your curls will grow again, fast,” she said, passing her trembling hand across his poor head. “You will soon be my own boy again.”

She did not say anything more after this, but

went to her own room and seemed to be very quiet and peaceful. It was a beautiful night, with a high, fair moon.

In the morning, when he had started the fire, she did not slip out in her patched wrapper to make the coffee as early as he had expected, so he went down to the grocery store and dusted it out, and busied himself a while. His heart throbbed at being trusted with this rude duty. As he swept, snatches of the Easter chant rose to his unaccustomed lips. He felt almost embarrassed there alone in the empty store, because he found himself humming softly :—

“ The Lord is risen,  
The soul is free ! ”

Now, she slept so late, that it occurred to him presently to go up-stairs and see if she needed him for anything. So he put away the broom, straws uppermost, with the methodical fidelity of a happy person, and climbed the stairs, still humming :—

“ The soul is free !  
The soul is free ! ”

When he had washed the dust from his face and hands, he went in at last, and spoke to her.

Afterward it was remembered how she had asked :  
“ To see my son a free man — and to have a little home of our own — if only for twenty-four hours before I die ! ”



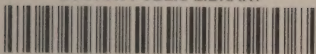








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